

# NATIONALISM, MARXISM, AND WESTERN POPULAR CULTURE IN YUGOSLAVIA: IDEOLOGIES, GENUINE AND SPURIOUS

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Laž Ima Kratke Noge

(A Lie Has Short Legs) Serbian Proverb

In 1924, linguist/anthropologist Edward Sapir published an essay entitled "Culture, Genuine and Spurious." In this now classic study, he identified two opposing societal types. He characterized what he termed "genuine cultures" as inherently harmonious in that their institutions, ideas, and values were tightly integrated into a seamless whole. In this way, life's various spheres of activity and creativity were conceived of as functionally and ideologically interrelated with respect to a widely shared overarching ethos. In such cultures nothing was spiritually meaningless and little value was attributed to such "modern" concepts as efficiency and utilitarianism. What Sapir had in mind were the small, relatively isolated societies which anthropologists had traditionally studied. In contrast to these, Sapir portrayed the cultures of contemporary urban-industrial societies as "spurious." In this context, the individual's experiences, activities, and social relationships were seen as both fragmented and shallow in content. Moreover, while genuine cultures exhibited a great deal of variation, spurious cultures tended to be geographically uniform and standardized. Of course, Sapir's dichotomy represents an ideal model, and it is clear that real societies will fall somewhere on a spectrum between these two polarities, evidencing various combinations of the characteristics hypothesized by Sapir.

In the following discussion, a model analogous to Sapir's will be proposed in respect to nationalism, Marxism, and Western popular culture, ideologies which have profoundly influenced the recent history of former Yugoslavia. In this respect, a comparison can be drawn between what can be described as contrived, self-consciously held, or deliberately

propagated ideologies (spurious or *artificial* ideologies) on the one hand, and those which are discerned by ordinary people to be part of the "natural" or "God-given" order (*genuine* or *natural* ideologies). Here the term "natural order" is used in the *emic* sense, that is, as a reflection of native perceptions in contrast to an imposed (*etic*) analytical construct. In other words, this kind of ideology constitutes an artifact of folk *culture* or the *little tradition* (cf. Redfield 1956), and as such it tends to be embraced in a largely uncritical and matter-of-fact manner as an expression of conventional wisdom. Because of this, folk belief systems not only tend to evidence greater tenacity and longevity than ideologies deliberately imposed from above by political and/or intellectual elites, but their assumptions are much less susceptible to empirical or experiential negation. Moreover, they are to a large degree self-perpetuating since they constitute an integral element in the socialization process of children, and are subsequently reinforced by a myriad of cultural traits integrated into everyday life. As a result, such belief systems do not require the same level of deliberate reinforcement as do elite-imposed ideologies. In other words, they are not subject to the same degree of cultural entropy as are those ideologies which have been consciously propagated. Furthermore, they resemble what Carl Jung (1983:55) has described as "collective symbols" in that they are similarly perceived to be of "divine origin" and to have been "revealed to man." In this case, "divine origin" need not necessarily have a religious connotation, but rather one which refers to a provenance within the "natural order." As is the case with origin myths, such folk ideologies are "sacred" narratives which address the broader meaning of life, the cosmos, and human morality (cf. Custred 2001:17).

In this essay, I will argue that ethno-nationalism among the South Slavs

conforms generally to what has been defined above as a *genuine ideology*. As a consequence, it constitutes an overarching ethos which tends to be reified and embraced in an uncritical manner. Thus, as a shared world view it proffers a comfortable and familiar medium within which people define themselves and lead their everyday lives. However, it is not my intent to interpret South Slav nationalism exclusively in primordialist terms, nor to negate instrumentalist and constructionist interpretations. In this respect, it should be noted that not only do many aspects of popular nationalist belief have great-tradition origins, but that recent history amply demonstrates that these sentiments can be easily co-opted by intellectual and political elites.

In stark contrast to the tenacity of the various South Slav nationalisms, I hold that Marxism's relatively brief period of florescence and subsequent demise in Yugoslavia was due at least in part to the widely perceived artificial or spurious nature of its ideology as revealed by the evident dissonance between its expressed values and its practice. In this sense, it can be conceptualized as a failed *revitalization movement*<sup>1</sup> whose promise of a utopian future was increasingly belied by the realities of everyday experience. Thus, rather than being integrated syncretically into the national and individual ethos, Marxism remained cynically and precariously compartmentalized, external to both.

A third and more recent force paralleling both Marxism and nationalism in Yugoslavia has been the influence of Western popular culture. Although the idealization of the West and in particular things American is hardly a new phenomenon in the Balkans, in recent times, it has assumed a far greater significance due to both the ubiquitous nature of mass communication and the anomic social and economic conditions engendered by the fall of communism. I make reference here to the role of Western commercially produced popular culture, not so much as an ideology per se, but as a medium for the dissemination of ideas and fantasies which are for the most part inimical to traditional South Slav culture. These representations do, nevertheless, constitute a world view which by its very nature will be shown to conform to the definition of a spurious *ideology*.

### Core Values and the Resurgence of South Slav Nationalism

Sociologist Jeffzy Smolicz (1979:57-58) has identified what he labels "core values," that is, those elements "forming the most fundamental components of a group's culture." In the case of the South Slavs, these primary markers of identity are comprised of a series of dyadic cross-linkages which subsume in different combinations religious and linguistic affiliations. Since the Serbs, Croats, and Slav Muslims speak the same language (in spite of efforts by Slav Muslim and Croat nationalists to deny this unity), religion (not necessarily religiosity) marks the perceptual boundaries between them.

When in June of 1981, six children in the impoverished Hercegovinian village of Medjugorje began reporting a series of visitations by the Virgin Mary, this phenomenon was quickly co-opted by the Franciscans (Bax 1995:10-20), a Catholic order which had enthusiastically embraced the pro-Nazi Independent State of Croatia during World War II (Balen 1952 and Lauriere 1993, among many others). At about the same time, construction began in Belgrade to complete what was to become the largest Orthodox church in the Balkans. Its dedication to Saint Sava, the Patron of Serbia, clearly underscored its nationalist implications. Both these events heralded the emergence into the public arena of religion as an ethnic marker after more than four decades of semi-obscurity under the Titoist regime.

It would be erroneous to interpret religion in the Balkans as simply an elite, great-tradition phenomenon. In this regard, the dogmas and practices of official religious bodies are paralleled by and intertwined with a plethora of folk beliefs and practices, the majority of which are confined within the boundaries of the respective religio-ethnic communities. In the case of the Serbs, for example, one can cite the *krsna slava*, the commemoration of the patriline patron saint, a celebration most Serbs hold to be uniquely Serbian (although, in fact, it is also typical of some Gypsies, Vlachs, and Macedonians). As one informant so aptly stated, "You don't feel Serbian unless you have a slava." Thus, the slava simultaneously expresses through ritual and hospitality both familial and national loyalties. Moreover, the slava is usually celebrated in the home rather than the church, often in a secular manner without the participation of a priest. Similarly, among the Croats and Slav Muslims, a myriad of folk

expressions of religious particularism provide a constant reminder of one's ethnic identity in a context of contrast and opposition. For example, in respect to the Croats and Serbs, their ritual cycles are regulated by different calendars, with the former employing the Gregorian and the latter the Julian. Of all the major religious holidays, only Easter falls occasionally on the same day. Similar observations can be made about the diacritical nature of the Slav Muslim ritual calendar. The point is that these customs and their attributed meanings form part and parcel of everyday life, and thus they constitute expressions of conventional wisdom. Consequently, they require little or no consciously imposed reinforcement or reification. In other words, they persevere by weight of tradition, that is, as the result of cultural inertia.

While linguistic and religious affiliations constitute overarching and fundamental determinants of national identity, they are further reinforced by a multitude of other markers which are largely though not exclusively associated with folk culture.<sup>11</sup> These include, among many others: historical myth; cosmology; regional dialects; ethnic stereotyping; folk rituals; family and clan lore; material culture; cuisine; literature, especially epic poetry; the arts; styles of conviviality and hospitality; and musical genres. These diacritics have a twofold impact in that they focus on ethnic differences while at the same time obscuring an abundance of characteristics shared with other groups. For example, Lockwood (1975:160), in his study of a village in western Bosnia, found that local Muslims, Serbs, and Croats, who otherwise closely resembled each other in many respects except religion, differentiated themselves symbolically by a few seemingly insignificant traits such as subtle differences in style of dress and the types of handicrafts sold at the marketplace. Although seemingly trivial, these signs served as effective boundary-maintenance mechanisms in contexts outside the village.

Musical genres provide an illustration of how effectively and precisely national and even regional identities are delineated and symbolized by elements of folk culture. Since World War II, commercially produced "national music" (*komponovana narodna muzika*) in various permutations has enjoyed broadly-based popularity, and during the recent civil wars it assumed considerable political significance (cf. Gordy 1999:103-164). The predilection for this

genre has been particularly strong among the provincial and working classes in Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia, and to a lesser extent in Croatia and Slovenia (cf. Simić 1979). The terms "national" and "folk" are employed here to signify those musical expressions which do not generally transcend ethnic boundaries in contrast to transnational forms such as those associated with Western popular culture. While the various types of Yugoslav national music are only subtly distinguishable from those of neighboring peoples (aside from language differences in the lyrics), internal variation within former Yugoslavia is enormous. Thus, while Macedonian music is often barely distinguishable from Bulgarian, and Slovene from Austrian, the vast gulf between the styles of Slovenia and Macedonia is readily perceived by even the most casual listener. Thus, within the realm of national music, almost no composition is without ethnic or regional specificity. In this way, the concept of national and regional identity is given overt expression in the enjoyable and highly evocative and emotive context of artistic expression.

### Nationalism as a World View

Nationalism and ethnicity can be conceptualized as a multi-stranded *world* view which contextualizes, and encompasses a wide range of life's ordinary and extraordinary concerns. In this sense, it shapes the way in which people think about themselves and others, their surroundings, their origins, life's goals, and so forth (cf. Kearney 1984:1). Although nationalism is commonly thought of as the creation of nineteenth-century literary and political elites, it also had its roots among ordinary people, especially in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. At the grass-roots level, it can be explained as the logical extension and abstraction of those sentiments which unite members of families, clans, tribes, and other small face-to-face communities. Thus, the values of ethno-nationalism represent a kind of ideological *charter* underwriting what Anderson (1991) has termed "imagined communities," that is, social systems which have grown too large to be validated by the kind of intimate personal relationships typical of so-called *simple societies*. Although more abstract, ethnically based sentiments appear to differ little qualitatively from those characterizing family and kinship ties. Indeed, the relationship between co-ethnics is often phrased symbolically in

kinship terms. Thus, at the folk level, ethno-nationalism conforms closely to Geertz's (1963) and Isaacs's (1975) definition of *primordialism*. In contrast, *instrumentalist* and *constructionist* approaches conceive of nationalism as a modern invention exploited by elites to further their economic and political ambitions (cf. Cohn 1974, Gellner 1983, and Walker and Stem 1993). However, the Yugoslav case demonstrates that these contrasting concepts can function symbiotically within the same context.

One way that the development of South Slav nationalism can be conceptualized is as a process which melded an emerging sophisticated cultural and political movement with themes and institutions long present in the indigenous folk cultures (cf. Sugar 1969).<sup>iii</sup> For example, in the Serbian lands, as was also the case elsewhere in nineteenth-century Europe, language and folklore became salient markers of ethnic identity. However, among the Serbs, religion (Orthodoxy) combined with elements of common law and kinship, on the one hand, and new artistic and literary creativity, on the other, to form the ideological basis of a nascent national consciousness (cf. Bogisić 1874; Halpern and Hammel 1969).

For many, perhaps most Serbs, the conceptual contrast between the nation and the family is largely one of degree. This is in opposition to the state which is viewed as belonging to another order of reality, and as such not associated with kinship values. The relationship between the family and the nation is eloquently expressed by Milovan Djilas in his epic work, *Land without Justice* (1958:3):

The story of a family can also portray the soul of the land. This is especially true in Montenegro where the people are divided in clans and tribes to which each family is indissolubly bound. The life of the family reflects the broader community of kin, and through it the entire nation.

The extension of the familial ethos to the nation<sup>iv</sup> reflects a perception of co-ethnicity as a form of quasi-kinship. One way in which this relationship can be modeled is as a series of concentric circles whose center is the family, and whose outermost ring encompasses the nation and defines the final limits of moral obligation. In other words, the conceptual space occupied by both the family and the nation constitutes a single, gradated *moral field*, with areas beyond its purview forming an *amoral sphere* where theoretically behavior is not subject to the

imposition of in-group moral judgments or sanctions (Simić 1991:27-32). In terms of this theory, the blood feud, once widespread in the Dinaric Mountains of the western Balkans, differs markedly from interethnic conflict. The feud, which was usually waged between clans belonging to the same ethnic group, was regarded as a moral, even sacred institution, and was conducted according to mutually agreed upon rules (cf. Boehm 1984; Karan 1986). In contrast, no set of mutual understandings or laws governed the conduct of interethnic conflict other than the obligation to inflict damage on the enemy. In this light, much of the cruelty reported in the recent Yugoslav civil wars can be explained by the fact that those belonging to other ethnic groups fell outside the realm of moral imperatives. Even the influence of religion has not significantly mitigated this behavior since, as history demonstrates, Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Islam in the Balkans have tended to at least tacitly endorse the values of the folk society.

### **Folk Culture and the Demise of Marxism in Yugoslavia**

The dissolution of Yugoslavia provides a striking example of the ways in which folk concepts of ethnicity were able to subvert the best efforts of the Titoist regime to create a pan-Yugoslav identity. The relative brevity of the apparent reconciliation on the part of Serbs, Croats, and Slav Muslims following World War II, in retrospect, speaks to both the tenacity of ethnic loyalties and the cyclical nature of their overt expression. In regard to Serb-Albanian relationships during this period, one cannot even speak of a period of reconciliation.

The tenacity of the nationalist ethos in former Yugoslavia stands out in sharp contrast to the failure of Marxism to achieve the same level of popular commitment and cultural integration, that is, to conform to what was previously defined as a "genuine ideology." Nevertheless, a great deal of effort was expended to realize this goal. Among other symbols employed in this respect were: Yugoslavia as the leader of the so-called nonaligned nations; Tito as the ethnically undifferentiated inheritor of the South Slav heroic tradition; the glorification of the role of Partisans in the National Liberation Struggle (*Narodna Oslobodilačka Borba*) during World War II; the concept of a unique Yugoslav form of socialism; the notion of "worker self-management" and, not least of all, the

catch-all slogan “brotherhood and unity” (bratstvo *ijedinstvo*).

Arguments have been made that the incidence of ethnically mixed marriages in former Yugoslavia suggests that the role of ethnicity in the recent civil wars was not as great as many have held (cf. Gagnon 1994). However, statistics regarding this can be quite misleading if taken at face value. For example, the Montenegrins have the highest incidence of outmarriage, but the vast majority of these unions are with Serbs with whom they share such close historical and cultural ties as to virtually constitute the same people (cf. Petrović 1985). Of particular significance was the inclusion of the category “Yugoslav” as a nationality in the census data. In this respect, it can be inferred that fearing discrimination, many Bosnian and Croatian Serbs opted for this designation in order to hide their ethnic identity. Thus, a union between a “Yugoslav” and a member of any other category would appear statistically to be an “ethnically mixed” marriage when in fact it may have been homogenous (Simić 1994: 33-34). Furthermore, culture and social structure also tend to shed doubt on the significance of mixed marriages. Given the strong patrilineal bias of South Slav culture and the tendency in rural areas for postmarital residence to be patrilocal, in many cases interethnic marriages probably simply provided a mechanism for recruiting women into the husbands' kinship groups with children assuming the ethnic identity of their fathers (cf. Petrović and Simić 1990). As Barth (1969:21) has noted, “examples of stable and persisting ethnic boundaries that are crossed by a flow of personnel are clearly more common than the ethnographic literature would lead us to believe.”

The strength of ethno-nationalist sentiments can be largely attributed to the fact that they are expressed in a multitude of familiar ways and are manifested both implicitly and explicitly in a broad spectrum of institutions and behaviors. They are taken as “natural” in that they are inculcated from earliest childhood and infused with an aura of sacredness. Moreover, they have no evident externally imposed source, although they may be appropriated and amplified by cultural elites and power brokers for their own purposes. In contrast, Marxism in Yugoslavia was never deeply internalized by the masses of people who became increasingly aware that its utopian promises of social justice, egalitarianism, and material well-being had not been borne out in practice. For instance, almost

thirty years ago, Doder (1974: 75) observed that Yugoslavs regarded public life as a fraud. Similarly, Denitch (1994: 158) describes the widespread disillusionment with and cynicism about Marxism:

It was responsible for all that ailed the society. Communism was now widely considered responsible for economic backwardness, low personal incomes, poor access to consumer goods, disintegration of traditional values, disrespect from the young, *repressed national grievances and resentments*, poor working habits, and everything else that prevented life in the Yugoslav republics from resembling that of the much-idealized Western Europe. [italics mine]

What the above observations make clear is that Marxism came to be regarded as a dysfunctional ideology antithetical to traditional culture and national aspirations. Nevertheless, it succeeded in maintaining its ascendancy for over four decades by means of constant propagation in the schools, the workplace, and the mass media, as well as through a system of sanctions and rewards within the context of a relatively authoritarian and repressive political structure. Despite these efforts to create a sense of legitimacy, it never attained a position of genuine moral authority in the society. With the demise of Yugoslav Marxism, an ideological vacuum was created, a vacuum which was quickly filled by the more enduring and deeply inculcated ethos of nationalism. However, because this ethos required very little external validation, it was easily exploited by political and economic opportunists.

### **Popular Culture and the Idealization of the West**

As mentioned previously, the idealization and emulation of the West is hardly a new phenomenon in the Balkans, in fact, it has a venerable history dating from at least the beginning of the nineteenth century. For instance, with the final liberation of Belgrade from Turkish rule in 1817, the city began a profound physical transformation with the destruction of mosques, Turkish baths, and other remnants of the Ottoman period. By the end of the nineteenth century, Europeanization had touched at least superficially all segments of Belgrade society. Its urban nucleus had been physically metamorphosed into what resembled a provincial Central European town (Andrić et al. 1967). However, this veneer of urbanism and Europeanization barely obscured the city's

peasant foundations and the substratum of rural Balkan values which continued to dominate social life. However, today the influence of the West, especially that of America, differs profoundly from the foreign impact on Serbian life during any previous epoch. In this respect, while I will focus mainly on Serbia, it is my presumption that in a general way the following comments can be extrapolated to other Balkan and East European peoples as well.

In addressing the issue of Western influence, Denitch (1994:134) speaks Of "East Europeans seeking to become just like their idealized versions of West Europeans or Americans." The key word here *is idealized*. The significance is that these representations do not represent a true picture of American and West European life, nor do they respond in any realistic way to the substantive economic needs and social concerns of East Europeans. However, they do act as a powerful tool for the erosion of the traditional cultural and social order. In this sense, Western popular culture provides a conduit for the transmission of certain values, values which do not so much constitute a coherent ideology per se, but rather communicate a vaguely defined and decontextualized world view. In regard to former Yugoslavia, it is clear that popular culture has constituted one of the tools--ostensibly a benign one--for the neocolonial cultural, political, and economic domination of Southeast Europe by the United States and its allies, especially Germany.

Drawing on George Orwell's classic 1984 and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and *Brave New World Revisited*, Neil Postman (1986: vii-vii) points out the insidious and coercive nature of popular culture (what he subsumes under the rubric of *amusement*):

As Huxley remarked in *Brave New World Revisited*, the civil libertarians and rationalists who are ever on the alert to oppose tyranny failed to take into account man's almost infinite appetite for distractions. In 1984... people are controlled by inflicting pain. In *Brave New World*, they are controlled by inflicting pleasure. In short, what Orwell feared was that what we hate will ruin us. Huxley feared that what we love will ruin us.

This image of pleasure is perhaps most effectively communicated by television. As in much of the world, people in Serbia are sitting in darkened rooms fixed on a glowing screen viewing images, more often than not intellectually vacuous ones, transmitted over thousands of miles from a culture with little

historical connection to their own. And what exactly are they watching? As the Turning Point Project described it in a paid statement in the *New York Times* of June 19, 2000 (as part of a series entitled "Megatechnology"):

Even in places on the earth where there are still no roads--tiny tropical islands, icy tundras of the north, or in the mountains of the Himalayas--people are sitting in their grass houses or log cabins watching Americans in Dallas driving sleek cars, or standing around swimming pools drinking martinis, plotting ways to do-in one another. Or they are seeing "Bay Watch," the most popular series in the world. Life in Texas, California, New York is made to seem the ultimate in life's achievements while local culture ... can seem backward.

These images not only communicate an illusion of excitement, luxury, and material well-being, but also glamorize crime, violence, and sexual promiscuity. In essence, the values projected are those of moral relativism, unfettered individualism, consumerism, blatant materialism, and above all, pleasure. Moreover, these messages are disseminated in a spectrum of appealing ways: in films, television, advertising, fashions, fast food, the print media, radio, the music industry, and less directly by religious missionaries of non-native sects and the representatives of a spectrum of foreign-based NGOs. The implicit message here is clear: "Embrace the concept of *democracy and free markets*, and you will have all these things." In other words, the subtext is a political and economic one (cf. Schiller 1989).

The influence of various forms of rock music in Serbia provides a case in point. In his study of the "culture of power" in Serbia under Milošević, Gordy (1999),<sup>v</sup> negatively contrasts the traditionalists, whom he stereotypes as nationalists "less open to democratic possibilities" (203), with those who advocate the Western values of democracy in both public and private life as an expression individualism, self-determination and unbridled personal freedom. For Gordy, among those who espouse the latter are young Belgrade rock musicians. While lavishing praise on them, the author directs his scorn at the various forms of national music which he associates with retrograde political and cultural attitudes. He sees such genres as shutting off sophisticated, cosmopolitan cultural alternatives from the West. In his words (108), "Neofolk was marginalized in the cities, as was its audience, regarded as composed of 'peasants' (seljaci) and 'primitives'

(primitivci).” The relative musical value of these two forms of musical expression is not at issue here, but simply the fact that rock music is indisputably the carrier of certain Western values, principally American ones.

What kind of values are embedded in the rock movement which Gordy so lionizes? If the lyrics are any indication, they are ego-centered and hedonistic, or in the author's own words, they constitute a *culture of pleasure*. This hedonistic idol is succinctly given substance in his concluding remarks wherein he comments upon the various symbols which he observed at an anti- Milošević demonstration in Belgrade (208):

The protesters seemed to suggest with their flags that the countries of the world, its *entertainment* spectacles, and *commercial* products share a value--and that the places and *pleasures* of the world, the taste of its bourbon, and the strategies of Michael Jordan belong to them also [*italics mine*].

Gordy's words are echoed in a more general context by Rothstein (2002: 19), who comments:

American popular culture is capitalist culture. In capitalism commodities are produced that will spur desire for more commodities. Capitalism seduces through sheer force of marketing and sheer promise of *pleasure* [*italics mine*].

The question remains in the case of former Yugoslavia, as well as in the rest of the former Eastern Block, as to whether this promise of pleasure and material well-being can be delivered. The evidence to date suggest a prophetic parallel with Marxism, the decline of which resulted to a significant degree from the dissonance between its ideology and its perceived reality. The case of Serbia's impoverished and demoralized neighbor, Bulgaria, can perhaps provide some instructive insights. For example, Blagovesta Doncheva (1999) comments that the Bulgarians were cruelly deceived by the West, and that democracy has only created hordes of unemployed workers, the closing of factories, beggars on the streets, and old people digging in the trash (cf. Balicki 1998:4). This stands out in stark contrast to the profusion of consumer goods displayed in the shop windows along Sofia's Vitosha street, goods far out of the reach of most Bulgarians.

It is in the disparity between the promise and the reality that Marxism and free-market capitalism (as portrayed in popular

culture) exhibit a common feature as ideologies. In Sapir's words, they are both “spurious.” In contrast to nationalism, both are far more susceptible to empirical and experiential negation. In the case of Western popular culture, it has a fragmenting effect in that it is oriented primarily toward the youth. This is particularly significant in the case of former Yugoslavia where traditional culture has stressed the solidarity and corporacy of family and kinship relations (cf. Hammel 1968, Simić 1973, among many others). Moreover, popular culture is generic and homogenizing. In this way, it links the individual conceptually not to local culture and institutions, but rather to an imagined and often ill-perceived global society.

In his book, *One Market under God*, Frank (2000:xiv-xv) speaks of “market populism,” a system which claims to “express the popular will more articulately and more meaningfully” than do mere elections. He further points to the role of Hollywood in tandem with Madison Avenue in the propagation of this ideology. However, he notes the concomitant presence of elements of class warfare with the elevation of the rich and the disregard of the poor. Nowhere is this more evident than on the streets of Belgrade where expensively dressed nouveaux-elites and would-be elites stand out in sharp contrast to those unfortunates struggling to survive by selling sundries on Knez Mihailo Street late into the night. It is the latter who are emblematic to one degree or another of the impoverished general population. Thus, the ideology embodied in “market populism” works only for a minority, and surely the dissonance between belief and practice must be manifest even to the privileged few. In contradiction to this, the strength of nationalism does not lie in the fulfillment of certain explicit promises, but stems from the power of transcendent historical and racial myth as well as from a sense of individual and group connection to the real or imagined glories of the nation. Such sentiments are, in fact, often strengthened by shared adversity. In times of chaos and economic and political instability, they provide a last defense against the forces of nihilism and anomie. This inherent durability of nations and nationalism is incisively summarized by Smith (1998:159):

I have argued that, despite the capacity of nationalisms to generate widespread terror and destruction, the nation and nationalisms provide the only realistic socio-cultural framework for a modern world order. They have no rivals today. National identity too remains widely attractive

and effective and is felt by many people to satisfy their needs for cultural fulfillment, security and fraternity. Many people are still prepared to answer the call of the nation and lay down their lives for its cause. Finally, nations are linked by chains of memory, myth and symbol to the widespread and enduring type of community, the *ethnie*, and this is what gives them the unique character and their profound hold over the feelings and imaginations of so many people.

The function of nationalist ideology as an individual psychological resource was once very simply but profoundly expressed to me some thirty years ago by a shabbily dressed elderly man on the streets of Sofia whom I asked for directions:

"I don't know sir, but you see I am just a poor street sweeper, but thanks to God, a Bulgarian street sweeper."

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## Notes

The observations in this essay are based in part on my over thirty-five years of field work and periodic residence in Yugoslavia, principally in rural and urban Serbia, but also in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Montenegro. This essay was presented at The International Symposium on Ethnic Identity sponsored by the Demokritos Foundation and the Laboratory of Anthropology of the University of Thrace at Xanthi, Greece, July 6 to July 9, 2002.

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<sup>i</sup> In regard to the characteristics of *revitalization movements*, see Wallace (1956).

<sup>ii</sup> The term *folk* is employed here to mean "those traits associated with everyday life," that is, with the so-called little tradition. While the term *popular culture* might also be appropriate in this context, I have reserved it exclusively for reference to "commercially produced Western popular culture."

<sup>iii</sup> For recent works on South Slav nationalism, see among many others: Denitch (1994); Lederer (1996); and Vučković " (1997:54-81).

<sup>iv</sup> The term *nation* is employed throughout this essay as virtually synonymous with *ethnic group*, that is, in the Slavic sense of *narod*.

<sup>v</sup> For a detailed analysis of Gordy's work, see Simić (2000).