THE FIRST AND LAST YUGOSLAV: SOME THOUGHTS ON THE DISSOLUTION OF A STATE

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Ginite, braco, junaci, ljudi! propoast vasu svet ce da zna. Nebo ce plakat dugo i gorko...

"Perish, brothers, heroes, men! The world will know of your ruin. The heavens will cry long and bitterly..."
Djura Jaksic, 1862

It was perhaps a decade ago when I first heard a bit of popular wisdom asserting that "Tito was the first and last Yugoslav." Although this was hardly the literal truth, it has proven, in retrospect, all too prophetic. Be this as it may, at that time, I did not take such expressions very seriously. For example, in 1981 when I wrote an article about South Slav nationalism as a folk ideology (published in 1991), I was not entirely convinced of the strength and tenacity I myself attributed to it. Somehow, in spite of the many danger signs, I was hopeful that almost a half century of Marxist (and quasi-Marxist) rule would have succeeded in transcending the various constituent national loyalties and imposing a more universalistic, though probably no less mystical, Pan-Yugoslav concept. Unfortunately, another adage turned out to be closer to the truth, "Woe unto a brotherhood and unity imposed by force of law" (Tesko je bratstvu i jedinstvu koje se silom zakona stvara).

Probably very few of us who have spent our academic careers studying Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia were entirely prepared for the violence of the present crisis or the intensity of the interethnic hatred which has resurfaced after more than forty years of relative quiescence. It is equally certain that each of us holds a distinct view of these events, a view dependent to a large extent on our individual background and experience. For this reason I feel obliged to introduce this discussion reflexively in order to place my comments in their proper context. The essential facts can be stated very succinctly. I consider myself a Serbian-American, and, although I have carried out ethnographic field work among Croats (on the islands of Rab and Krk, near the port of Rijeka, and in California), the majority of my research has been among Serbs both in Yugoslavia and America (field research in Yugoslavia was on seven occasions between 1966 and 1968, and focused largely on problems related to modernization and urbanization). Thus, it would be disingenuous on my part to deny my pro-Serbian bias. However, at the same time, I also feel an obligation to strive for a degree of objectivity, and I will make every attempt to distinguish personal opinion and interpretation from historical and ethnographic reality to the degree that this is ever possible. Finally, I would like to stress that I have always unequivocally supported the concept of Yugoslavia, and remember nostalgically the days of my youth in California when Serbs and Croats attended each other's events, frequently intermarried, and simply referred to themselves collectively as "Slavs" or "naski." Thus, it is with great sadness that I attempt to deal analytically and dispassionately with a topic so laden with emotion and unfulfilled expectations.

In the following essay—and I stress that it is an essay, not a scholarly research paper—I will focus principally, although not exclusively, on three general topics: the nature of nationalism among the South Slavs, and why I believe this ideology has so violently reasserted itself at the present time; an overview of the rationale for the current Serbian attitude vis-à-vis the Croats, the Bosnian Muslims, and Kosovo Albanians; and, finally, some speculations regarding the origins of the prevailing negative stance in the West toward the Serbs. By way of introduction, I would like to assert that I recognize the legitimate right of the Croats, Slav Moslems, and Albanians to political and cultural self-determination. But, the crucial question remains as to how this can be accomplished while respecting similar aspirations of other ethnic groups? Unfortunately, the reality of the current crisis involves the incompatible claims of the belligerents, claims that remain irreconcilable due to the fact that each side bases its moral stance on a different set of criteria. Moreover, these ideological foundations are axiomatic, and, as such, are largely not amenable to rational argumentation, empirical proof, or dispassionate resolution. Here, as in Israel, the manifest rationale underlying this conflict is the opposition between historical and demographic rights. Nevertheless, there is at least one value that the Serbs, Croats, Slav Moslems, and Albanians all share, an intense sense of their own individual national identities.

South Slav Nationalism:
Two seemingly innocuous events dating back to about ten years ago can be seen as portents of the future, harbingers of the current Yugoslav chaos. In June of 1981, the Holy Virgin is said to have appeared to six children near the poor and remote Hercegovinian town of Medjugorje. As a result, Medjugorje soon became an international pilgrimage center in spite of the failure of the Catholic Church to officially recognize as a "miracle" what was to become a series of alleged visitations. Most significantly, this phenomenon became associated with the Franciscans, the Roman Catholic order most closely associated with the wartime Independent State of Croatia (NDH), underscoring its nationalist implications. A similar manifestation was taking place at about the same time in Belgrade, work had begun on the completion of a "memorial church" in honor of St. Sava the Patron Saint of Serbia, a project for which permission had previously been denied by the Tito government. Today, this sanctuary, only a dozen or so blocks from the city's very heart, not only dominates Belgrade's skyline, but is also the largest Eastern Orthodox Church in Europe, larger than Istanbul's Aghia Sophia (now a museum). In effect, the lid was off public religious expression, and in the case of the Croats, Serbs, and Slav Muslims, religion equals ethnicity.

It would be erroneous to blame the current Yugoslav debacle entirely on nationalist passions, although many of the participants are surely motivated by them. At the same time, it cannot be denied that among the South Slavs nationalism remains a powerful and compelling force, one that apparently has become a medium for the sublimation and expression of a spectrum of complaints, some historical, others economic and political. For still others of a more cynical and exploitative nature, ethnic passions surely have provided a means for the attainment of power and economic advantage.

Events in Yugoslavia illuminate the struggle of two opposing ideologies regarding the nature of the state that have characterized European history for at least two centuries. One focuses on the creation of nation-states, i.e., the coalescence of polity and ethnicity, the other on the building of multinational and supranational political entities. Among the Yugoslavs, the former of these contrapuntal forces has triumphed over decades of quasi-Marxist political indoctrination and institution building stressing the primacy of the federal state. The failure of this ideology is demonstrated by the fact that in the 1971 census only 273,077 persons out of approximately twenty million respondents declared themselves as nonspecific "Yugoslavs" (SFRJ 1974:3). Thus, in spite of all efforts by the Titoist government to create a sense of Yugoslav identity, after a rather short period of formal reconciliation, there was an intensification of feelings of ethnic distance and opposition. Among other indicators, contrary to the expectation that the republics would become increasingly heterogeneous, there was a growth of migration by individuals into the republics dominated by their own ethnic groups (Spasojevic 1984).

As is generally the case with ethnic identity elsewhere in the world, the various Yugoslav "nations" (narodi) are defined by a limited number of basic symbols existing in a system of cross-linkages involving principally religion and language, and requiring in most cases the presence of two uniquely combined signs for the designation of each nationality, for example, in the case of the Croats, Catholicism and the Serbo-Croatian language, in that of the Serbs, Orthodoxy and Serbo-Croatian; and in that of the Slav Muslims, Islam and Serbo-Croatian. Built upon this foundation is a superstructure of more ambiguous markers: historical antecedents and myths, regional folklore and dialects, literary traditions, and popular beliefs. While these cultural diacritics stress differences, at the same time, it also belies the many similarities shared by the Serbs, Croats, and Slav Muslims, similarities which in better times have provided an ideology of unity. Thus, dependent on the spirit of the times, the Yugoslavs have perceived themselves sometimes as variants of a single nation, or, at others, as separate and distinct ethnic groups. In other words, the various South Slav nationalism have exhibited a cyclical nature related to changing historical, economic, and political fortunes. For instance, it is my impression that the 1950s and 1960s were generally a time of relative ethnic latency during a period of rapid economic growth, intense rural-urban migration, a rising standard of living, and high expectations. All of this, of course, ultimately proved to be house of cards which began to collapse in the 1980s, and it was at this time that ethnic passions also began boiling to the surface in earnest. Also, the death of Tito heralded the accelerated economic and political decentralization of Yugoslavia, a significant factor contributing to the present crisis. But, the question still remains as to why nationalism in the face of all assaults against it has proven to be such a powerful and persistent force in Yugoslavia.

Clearly there are many possible answers to this question, but I will propose only one here, one which deals with the content of South Slav nationalism rather than its origins. In this respect, I suggest that there are two kinds of ideologies, one which I will label "natural," and the other
"artificial" or "constructed." Nationalism among the Yugoslavs falls into the first category. By "natural" I refer to the perception of the actors, nothing more. Thus, the nationalism of which I speak conforms to this definition in two senses: it is understood to be the product of the "order of things," and as such it cannot be ascribed to any particular human source. Rather, it is part and parcel of the folk psyche, and manifest in almost every area of culture and social life-in family, religion, folklore, literature, history, and the expressive arts. It is ubiquitous and inculcated from a child's earliest years, and thus it forms a constituent part of the total social environment. Moreover, its tenets are generally understood as resulting from either "natural law" or "divine creation." In essence, this ideology holds that: 1) members of an ethnic group share common origins not unlike members of a family; 2) the culture and language of a group not only define its membership, but also act as their "natural" mediums of expression (as one of my Belgrade informants expressed it, "speak Serbian so God will understand you!"); 3) conationalists are bound to each other by quasi-mystical ties, and share a common destiny; 4) every nation has a "God-given" or "natural" right to its own territory and polity; and 5) nations are separate moral orders of creation, and it is inevitable that conflicts will arise between them (Simic 1991:24-25).

In contrast, Marxist ideology in Yugoslavia has clearly been of the "artificial" or "constructed" type, although it has valiantly strived to be otherwise. Only for a very few did it ever become a "natural" system. It maintained itself only through constant propagation in the schools and the media, and as part of a system of punishments and rewards within the context of an authoritarian political system. In spite of the claims of "scientific Marxism," its moral and historical authority was constantly negated by the realities of everyday life, and those who avowed allegiance to it were widely perceived as hypocrites feathering their own nests.

With the Tito-Stalin break in 1948, new symbols had to be found to provide an ideological underpinning for Yugoslav communism. These were numerous, and all equally unsuccessful: national communism, Yugoslavia as the leader of the so-called nonaligned nations, the cult of Tito as a lineal descendant of the South Slav heroic tradition, and, finally, "worker self-management" (samoupravljanje). As previously noted, nationalism remained relatively quiescent during most of this period, although it did on occasion express itself dramatically as was the case with the Croatian Spring. However, as the pace of disintegration of the federal system quickened, nationalism for both the Serbs and Croats increasingly took on the aspect of revitalization movements, promising to restore the mythical glories of the past and to fill the anomie void resulting from the collapse of Titoism and all that it had promised. Not surprisingly, the Serbs and Croats blamed each other for Yugoslavia's failure. The Croats attributed their malaise to srbokomunisti, ("Serbian communists"), while the Serbs pointed to the Croat-Slovene origins of Tito, and the leading roles played by Kardelj, Kidric, and Dolanc, all Slovenes. After all, "the only influential Serbs had been Djilas and Rankovic who long ago had fallen into political obscurity."

The Serbian Perspective: Croatia

The moral stances and mutual recriminations in the current Yugoslav conflict are numerous and complex. Nevertheless, most often cited are the Croatian territorial claims based on historical antecedents and the Serbian ones resting on the perceived rights of the Serbian minority in Croatia to political and cultural self-determination. The Croats hold that their present boundaries, as established within Yugoslavia following the Second World War, are essentially those of "historic Croatia." Although a number of dates are cited, most logically this refers to Croatia's territory at the time of its incorporation of the Military Frontier in 1881 plus Dalmatia which remained under direct Austrian rule until 1918. However, these dates are entirely arbitrary since the borders of Croatia have changed so frequently over the past millennium. Moreover, with the exception of a few years during World War II, Croatia has never enjoyed the status of a totally independent state since a period of about two centuries ending in the eleventh century. Rejecting this historical rationale, the Serbs assert that all regions in which they are in the majority are integral parts of the "Serbian nation." Within Croatia, this includes at least twelve communes (opstine): Benkovac, Donji Lapac, Dvor, Glina, Gracac, Knin, Kostajnica, Pakrac, Korenica, Vrgin Most, Obrovac, and Vojnic (SFRJ 1974:13-14). Thus, the Serbian argument in its most essential form is simply that, if Croatia claims the right to declare its independence from Yugoslavia on the basis of the right to self-determination, then so also do the approximately 600,000 Serbs living within its current borders. This issue, however, simply represents the culmination of a series of events which I will now chronicle in highly abbreviated form, and from what I perceive as the Serbian perspective.

1. During World War II, the pro-Axis Independent State of Croatia (NDH) carried out an official program of
genocide, deportation, and forced conversion to Catholicism in respect to its Serbian population. While estimates vary in respect to the numbers of victims, most accounts place the figures at about 800,000 (including some tens of thousands of Jews, Gypsies, and Croats who opposed the policies of the Pavelic government). For instance, this is the number cited by Croatian author Sime Balen (1952:7) during a period when the Tito government was attempting to mute public recriminations regarding wartime atrocities. Similarly, Pridonoff (1955:79) estimates that between 500,000 and 800,000 Serbs were exterminated by the NDH. Present Croatian claims that these numbers were far less cannot be substantiated, nor can assertions that massacres of Croatian and Muslim civilians by Serbian Chetniks were on an even remotely similar scale, or as part of an official policy.

In addition, under wartime Croatian rule large numbers of Eastern Orthodox were forcibly converted to Roman Catholicism. In this respect, Pridonoff (1955:79) refers to Croatian Archbishop Stepinac's report of May 18, 1944 to the Pope affirming that there were 240,000 converts. The official policy of the NDH is perhaps best summarized by a speech delivered by Ante Pavelic's second in command, Mile Budak, in Gospic in July of 1941 (as reported by Balen 1952:116—my translation):

"We will kill one part of the Serbs, another we will expel, and the rest we will bring into the Catholic faith, and thus assimilate them as Croats."

The Serbs hold that because of these events they cannot ever live within an independent Croatian state. They also point out that they have been allies of the United States, Britain, France and Russia in two wars, while many, perhaps the majority of Croats supported the Central Powers in the First World War, and then again the Germans and Italians in the Second. Probably the final symbolic insult for the Serbs has been the recent popularity in Croatia of the song "Danke Deutschland" in gratitude for Germany's recognition of Croatian independence.

2. Possibly the single most significant event marking the beginning of the present Yugoslav chaos was the founding in Croatia of the Serbian Cultural Society Zora by economist, Dr. Jovan Opacic in August of 1989. Croatian communist officials quickly banned the organization. Dr. Opacic was arrested, tried, and sentenced to three months in prison. This reflected the opposition of the Croatian communist leadership to any form of autonomy, even cultural, for Croatia's Serbs. In June of 1990, Franjo Tudjman's Croatian Democratic Party replaced the communists. And, although Tudjman gave his "personal guarantee" regarding Serbian cultural and civil rights, he flatly refused to consider the question of political autonomy. The situation was further exacerbated by the appearance of symbols and slogans associated with the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) and its terrorist arm, the Ustasa. In July of 1990, the Croatian Serbs founded the Serbian National Council, and held a referendum regarding the autonomy of Croatian Serbs. The vote was virtually unanimous in favor. It was at this point that the Serbs began forming militias and arming themselves with the help of Serbia and Montenegro.

3. The direction events were taking was quite clear to the Serbs who now feared for their continuing security within an increasingly independent Croatia. When the Croats proposed holding a referendum on May 19th, 1991 regarding separation from Yugoslavia, the Serbs held their own on May 14th in which they voted to secede from Croatia should the Croats opt for independence. Five days later the Croats not only took this course, but also refused to recognize the results of the Serbian referendum. When in June of 1991 the Croatian Parliament, under pressure from Germany, finally voted to recognize the autonomy of the Serbs within the new Croatian state (though not their right to secede), it was far too late for the Serbs who, in any case, had no confidence in such declarations. Moreover, during this entire period, acts of discrimination and violence against the Serbs in Croatia had been increasing dramatically. These included the dismissal of Serbs from their jobs and civil service positions.

4. While it was true that Serbs were represented in disproportionately large numbers in the Yugoslav police, bureaucracy, and armed services, the Croatian assertions of "Serbian hegemony" in post-war Yugoslavia were hardly justified. The Tito government had effectively reduced the political power of the Serbs by the division of traditional Serbian lands between Serbia Proper (Uza Srbija), Vojvodina, Kosovo, and the newly-created republic of Macedonia.

5. It must be understood that the Croatian Serbs living in Dalmatia, Lika, Kordun, Banija, western Srem, and Slavonia (as is the case currently of the Bosnian and Hercegovinian Serbs) were simply asking to remain within Yugoslavia. There is no indication that there were any plans to incorporate them within the Republic of Serbia, but rather they would probably opt to form some
sort of confederation with Serbia and Montenegro. Moreover, the aim of Serbia, and by extension that of the Yugoslav army, has not been to force Croatia to remain within the confederation, but rather to support and protect Serbs living outside of Serbia.

6. The Serbs have interpreted the role of Croatia in support of the Albanian separatists in Kosovo as an indication of the same disloyalty they manifested toward their South Slav brethren during the First and Second World Wars.

The Serbian Perspective: Bosnia-Hercegovina:

When on October 15, 1991 Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic proclaimed his republic's independence, and the Western powers precipitously recognized Bosnia as a sovereign state without any resolution of its internal ethnic problems, the Serbs rose in rebellion as they had done earlier in Croatia. And, once again, the question must be posed, why should the Serbs not have the same right of self-determination as do others? Also, how can the West possibly justify the separation of a constituent republic from Yugoslavia, and condemn the Bosnian and Hercegovinian Serbs, who are majority in 34 communes, for exercising the same option?

The claims of Bosnian Muslims to statehood have little historical justification, nor is there any rationale for regarding the Bosnians as a nationality in any commonly understood sense of the word. Bosnia has long been a focal point of contention between East and West, a conflict dating from at least the time of Diocletian's division of the Roman Empire in 285 A.D. In this respect, Darby (1968:38) describes Bosnia prior to the twelfth century as continually changing masters, falling alternately under the domination of Croatian, Serbian, Hungarian, and Byzantine rulers. In his words, medieval Bosnia was "divided among autonomous tribal units separated by difficult country, and possessing neither well-defined frontiers nor a strong nuclear area."

Furthermore, the evidence indicates that Bosnia always had an ethnically mixed population (if, in fact, one can even speak of ethnicity in premodern Europe in any sense other than as an attribute of religious or class affiliation) rather than constituting a single nation or confessional group. Other than a period of sporadic and partial autonomy between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, Bosnia has virtually no history as an independent state. From the mid-fifteenth century it remained an integral part of the Ottoman Empire until 1878 when it fell under Austro-Hungarian control, and was finally annexed by the Habsburgs in 1908. In 1918 Bosnia-Hercegovina became part of the new Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. During World War II, it was incorporated into the pro-Axis Independent State of Croatia (NDH), but with the victory of the Allies, it was once again joined to Yugoslavia as a constituent republic in Tito's socialist federation. In respect to Bosnia's legitimacy as an independent state, Alexander Cockburn comments in The Nation (1922):

"In the eyes of many Serbs, 'Bosnia' is more than anything a political fiction to cloak the drive of Croatia to re-establish its wartime ambit, under the guidance, backing and armament of Germany. These days people talk of 'Croatia' or 'Bosnia' and 'Hercegovina' or 'Serbia' as though the frontiers had ancient, internationally recognized status. The present borders were drawn after the war by Tito, who was intent on punishing the Serbs, whose Chetniks had supported their wartime leader Mihailovic rather than himself."

There is little doubt that the current civil war in Bosnia has gone well beyond stated Serb goals of political self-determination. Nor can it be denied that the Bosnian Serbs are being encouraged and supplied by Belgrade just as are the Croatian forces in Bosnia by Zagreb (the Croatian government has finally admitted, after many denials, that its troops are in Bosnia-Hercegovina). What started as a rebellion has turned into a full-scale civil war, a war that could have been avoided had Bosnia-Hercegovina either remained within Yugoslavia, or had Izetbegovic agreed to its partition or cantonization along ethnic lines. The Bosnian Serbs fear, with some justification based on historical experience, that in an independent Bosnia they would be reduced to second-class citizens downgraded from a "constitutional people" to an "ethnic minority."

Izetbegovic is himself a symbol of what Bosnian Serbs most fear, that is, a chauvinistic, fundamentalist Islamic regime. In this respect, his Muslim Declaration is often quoted as evidence of his concept of the new Bosnian order (as cited in Serbian Network 1982):

"There can be no peace or coexistence between Islamic faith and non-Islamic institutions. The Islamic movement must and can take power as soon as it is morally and numerically strong enough, not only to destroy non-Islamic power, but to build a new Islamic one..."

Knowing the demonized role attributed to the Turks and Islam in Serbian history and myth--every evil, failure, and backwardness is commonly attributed to "five hundred years under the Turks" -Izetbegovic and his Slav Muslim
and Croatian supporters should have been well aware of the great dangers inherent in his premature declaration of independence before Bosnian and Hercegovinian Serbs were adequately assured that their political and cultural rights would be respected in the new state. Similarly, the violent Serbian response should have been no surprise given the history of interethnic and inter-religious relations in the Balkans, even during their lifetimes. In this respect, one way of understanding the ferocity of the present conflict is in terms of what I perceive to be the confrontation of mutually exclusive "moral fields," that is, social categories whose members regard their boundaries as circumscribing the outer limits of moral obligation (Simic 1975:48-85; 1991:30). Thus, in respect to one's collective enemy, there are no noncombatants, nor are there any rules of conduct, civility, or compassion.

This is, of course, a value system quite alien to the widely held, but frequently disregarded, universalistic Western ethos holding that ideally the same moral standards should be applied to everyone regardless of his or her ascribed characteristics. However, lest this analysis be somehow interpreted as strengthening the oft-repeated argument that the current conflict in former Yugoslavia is one between Western and Eastern values, the evidence strongly suggests that this world view of moral exclusivity prevails equally among all of the belligerents.

The Serbian Perspective: Kosovo:

On the surface the question of Kosovo seems paradoxical in light of Serbian demographic claims in Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina, that is, the Serbian rationale in respect to the Albanians appears to be based on historical antecedents. And, indeed, the Serbs do make much of the fact that Kosovo was "the cradle of Serbian civilization." However, this stance is somewhat deceptive inasmuch as the current crisis does not stem simply from ancient historical ties to this region, but also from what is an ongoing historical process dating from Turkish times, and more recently, from the period of World War II.

Over the centuries of Turkish occupation of the Balkans, the Ottomans had encouraged the largely Muslim Albanians to settle in Serbian lands, and, when in 1926 an agreement was finally reached between Yugoslavia and Albania regarding their mutual borders, almost half a million Albanians remained within the areas of Kosovo and Metohija. Again during the Second World War, the migration of Albanians into Yugoslavia intensified. As part of the Axis partition of Yugoslavia, their ally Albania was enlarged to include much of western Macedonia and the plain of Kosovo. During this time, Albanian militia brutally expelled at least 70,000 Serbs from Kosovo and settled an equal number of Albanians in their place. In northeastern Kosovo, the Serbs remained relatively undisturbed until 1944 when the Skenderbeg Albanian Division massacred thousands of Serbs and forced other thousands to flee to German-occupied Serbia proper. After the war, one of the first acts of the Tito government, on March 6, 1945, was to prohibit the return to their homes of the Serbs expelled by the Albanians. This law voided all land deeds executed within prewar Yugoslavia, but not those put in force during the Axis occupation. During the period from 1945 to 1948 at least 100,000 Albanians were allowed to migrate from Albania into Kosovo and Macedonia. These numbers may actually be quite low. For instance, Dragnich and Todorovich (1984:158) estimate that during the twenty-year period 1961-1981 between 150,000 and 200,000 Serbs were forced out of Kosovo, and that in the postwar era over 200,000 Albanians were settled there from Albania. Moreover, they also note that the demographic balance has been further skewed by the very high birth rate of the Kosovo Albanians, the highest in Europe and equal to that of many Third World countries (32 per 1,000). This Albanian influx was encouraged by substantial welfare payments financed by the Republic of Serbia. Of course, this kindled great resentment on the part of the Serbs who regarded the Albanians as enemies, and former clients of the Turks. Gradually the Albanians took over almost all government organs and socialist enterprises in Kosovo, oppressing the Serbian minority who obtained little support or protection from the central government.

The process of Albanization was carried one step further when in 1974 Kosovo was granted virtual autonomy with only nominal ties to the Republic of Serbia. This was followed by more than a decade of discrimination and outright terror directed at the Serbs, Montenegrins, and other non-Albanian minorities. Thousands fled to Serbia and Montenegro as the Albanians tightened their hold on the region. It was these events which eventually propelled Slobodan Milosevic into power, and resulted in the strong reassertion of Serbian control over Kosovo. Admittedly, this did involve sometimes harsh repression of Albanian separatists and political movements. However, this must be understood as the inevitable result of years of patience and restraint on the part of the Serbs. Moreover, the reincorporation of Kosovo into Serbia had among its goals both the protection of ethnic minorities and the maintenance of the integrity of the Yugoslav state.
The Croatian, Bosnian, and Kosovo conflicts raise the question as to whether the rights of minorities in former Yugoslavia can ever be adequately guaranteed in independent states dominated by single ethnic groups. It has frequently been suggested that the only viable solution is a confederation similar to the canton system of Switzerland. But, the Balkans are not Switzerland, and such a resolution now appears unacceptable to the major players as evidenced by the current escalation of the warfare in Bosnia-Hercegovina. Thus, the only remaining possibilities appear to be the reestablishment of a centralized and authoritarian Yugoslav state, or the large-scale exchange of populations, both of which seem extremely unlikely.

The Anti-Serbian West:

It is somehow unfathomable that the West has turned so quickly against its old ally Serbia. The constant flow of condemnation and censure in the press is as if the memory of the past century has been somehow obliterated, and the context of perception is only the immediate present. One would think that at least similar conflicts in other parts of the world might equally draw the Western media's moral wrath, the role of India, for example, in the Tamil-Singhalese dispute in Sri Lanka. But, such has not been the case. Even more astounding have been the impassioned and jargonistic rhetoric, and the expletives and buzzwords employed to characterize Serbia and Slobodan Milosevic (the "bad guy" in all this!): Stalinist, neo-Stalinist, demagogue, Byzantine (Greeks and Levantines please take note!), unreconstructed communist, totalitarian, Eastern, "beyond the bounds of Levan'tines please take note!), unreconstructed communist, patriarchal, Eastern, "beyond the bounds of civilized behavior" (Margaret Tuttwiler, U.S. State Department), naked aggressors, and so forth.

Although I lack definitive evidence, I would, nonetheless, like to suggest several causes to this turn of events: 1) the effectiveness of Croat propaganda due to their long and impassioned building of anti-Yugoslav institutions abroad; 2) the greater numbers of Croats than Serbs in the Western countries, especially the U.S., Canada, and Australia; 3) the direct or indirect influence of the Catholic Church which is now seeking to expand its influence into the perceived religious vacuum in Eastern Europe and the Balkans—it is significant that at a recent meeting of Eastern Orthodox Patriarchs in Istanbul on the Day of Orthodoxy, a warning was sent to Rome not to look upon the Orthodox lands as fertile ground for proselytizing; and, 4) the political and economic power of Germany in the European Community and its promised role in the rebuilding of the former Soviet Block. Clearly the influence of Germany is also expanding in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, and the independence of Slovenia and Croatia obviously represent an important objective of its foreign policy. And, it does not seem too farfetched to interpret Germany's success in forcing the EC states to follow her lead in the support and recognition of the breakaway former Yugoslav republics as a means of asserting her authority over the rest of Europe.

Many of the accusations against the Serbs are patently absurd. Perhaps the most imaginative among these is the contention by Sabrina Ramet (1991:108) that among the "chief losers in Serbia as the result of retribalization" are "women" because "Milosevic's surge has been accompanied by a powerful reassertion of the claims of patriarchy." Since when did patriarchy require "reassertion" among any of the South Slavs? Only slightly less grotesque is the accusation that Milosevic and the Serbs are "Stalinists." The press seems to have forgotten that Tito broke with Stalin in 1948, and that his regime was lauded by the West as the most liberal in the Communist world, and because of this it was rewarded extravagantly with largesse. Any aspects of communism which still remain in Serbia are surely the legacy of the Titoist period. Moreover, both Milosevic and Tudjman have communist backgrounds as does Kucan in Slovenia. It is true that Milosevic was the former leader of the Serbian Communist party, but that party no longer exists. In respect to Milosevic's political orientation, comments in the Woodrow Wilson Center's East European Studies (1991:3) conclude that "the notion of him as a 'Bolshevik' or any other kind of ideologue is unconvincing even to his political opponents in Belgrade." While Milosevic won a reasonably fair election on a nationalist and socialist platform, the evidence seems quite clear that neither Serbia nor Croatia are democracies in the Western sense. Thus, the continual accusation that the conflict in Yugoslavia is somehow one between totalitarianism and democracy is a vacuous one.

Whatever may emerge regarding the ultimate causes of the present strife in former Yugoslavia, its roots cannot be reduced to some simple ideological formula, although we do not do so, nationalism surely would be high on the list. Clearly what this civil war is not about is the conflict between Eastern and Western values, although it is frequently portrayed in the media as such. At best, one can conclude that not only does history repeat itself, but that it is also a never ending series of confrontations about turf, power, and resources. In the Balkans these resources are not only distributed unequally, but are generally perceived to exist in increasingly declining quantities.
contrary to the bright promises of former Marxist regimes. Finally, I would like to conclude with the caveat that no matter what conclusions I may have reached here, events are moving so fast in former Yugoslavia that by the time this essay appears, it will surely be obsolescent.

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