

BRIDGE ON THE SAVA: ETHNICITY IN EASTERN CROATIA, 1981-1991

Mary Kay Gilliland Olsen
Pima Community College,
and University of Arizona

War in Yugoslavia: An Ethnic War?

The war in the former Yugoslav territories is represented in popular sources as primarily an ethnic one. Originally it was referred to by some as a civil war and by others as a war of aggression of one nation or people (Serbs) against other newly independent countries (first Slovenia, then Croatia and now Bosnia and Hercegovina). The clash among Serbs, Croats and Muslims is portrayed as a nationalist revival, a consequence of deep-seated historically-constructed enmities brewing beneath the surface of forty-five years of relative political calm. This paper presents a different view. It argues that nationalism and hatred expressed by members of nationality groups towards members of other such groups are not revivals but transformations, new expressions of economic and political competition and discontent. Political leaders and other elites made use of available cultural symbols associated with nationality or ethnicity in order to gain backing for political agendas which were not primarily ethnically motivated.

Numerous scholars, primarily historians, have demonstrated that among Serbs, Croats and other South Slavs there have been, through centuries of living in close proximity, "... feelings both of mutual attraction and of competition and enmity" (Jelavich 1990:1). Nationalist sentiments and claims to separateness (and often superiority of one group over another) are evident in the written histories of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. At the same time, there have been individuals and groups who have claimed that all or some of the South Slav nationalities are in reality a single people. The latter claims have alternatively made use of or ignored similarities and differences in language, religion, political history and local customs (Jelavich 1990, esp. 7, 219, 256-7).

The primary aim of this paper is not to deny altogether that nationalism plays a role in the current political struggle, nor even to deny that it has been a fairly continuous cultural theme in the history of the South Slavs. The goal is rather to examine the experience of ethnicity at a lower level of abstraction, and within a limited spatial and temporal context. This contribution is based on research in Croatia since 1981 (then the Croatian

Republic of Yugoslavia). It draws primarily on data collected during twelve months of ethnographic field research in the town of Slavonski Brod in 1982-3. A second period of research in 1991, this time in the Dalmatian region of Croatia, provided an opportunity to visit old friends in Brod and gather additional data from both Dalmatia and Slavonia. I have throughout the ten-year period maintained a dialogue with a few friends and colleagues through correspondence and telephone conversations, and continue to do so at present.

Reconstructing National Identities:

Whether the war is an ethnic one or not, there are clearly other variables than nationality at the root of the conflict. Much of the literature on ethnogenesis, ethnic conflict and ethnic boundary maintenance, supports the notion that ethnicity itself is rarely the cause of conflict, but that heightened ethnic consciousness (as opposed to a more vaguely defined, less politically-motivated ethnic awareness) is often an outcome of unequal access to power, prestige, material resources or other tangible or intangible social benefits (Devereaux 1975; McKay and Lewins 1978). In the case of the former Yugoslavia, competition for power and control of economic wealth are more likely at the root of the difficulties, at a national level; the experience of individuals, however, is now often one of an emotional reaction against an "other" defined only, or mostly in ethnic terms. I received a letter in December 1992 from an old friend, Draga, the niece of my former landlady. Draga is a young wife and mother who lives near Deronje, in the region of Serbia known as Backa. Draga's parents are Serbs, though her mother's mother is a Croat from Bosnia. Draga's mother's sister was my landlady, who had married a Croat and lived in Slavonia. In 1982-3, Draga joined the household of her aunt, my landlady, in Slavonia. She lived there with us for five months, and at that time seemed unconcerned whether her friends or relatives were Croats or Serbs. Draga now has a husband fighting with the Serbs in Bosnia; her cousins' husbands have also joined the Serbian forces in Bosnia. She wrote to me in November 1992, "You can't imagine what our lives are like. The news you hear is nothing compared to the reality of the situation. Ustasi and Muslims are raping four and five

year old girls. (This she has heard on the Serbian news.) They are not normal humans."

Draga's new or heightened sense of *Srpstvo* (being Serbian), and redefinition of other ethnic nationals as enemies, appears to have come about since the war began. Draga and her children now live on the edge of poverty. Her husband has gone to the army, and Draga cannot draw his salary. She herself cannot go to work, because there is no work to be had, she says, and because she has two small children who need her at home (particularly in these dangerous times, she emphasized). I have observed similar shifts among Croatian friends, and others of mixed nationality. Often people seem to be able to separate a known Croat or Serb, from Croats or Serbs as categories defined as other (and bad).

Dimensions of Identity: Nationality and Place:

The conflict is linked to nationality, and to other dimensions of personal and group identities, though the latter are less elaborated either by those involved or by those on the outside, looking on. It is expressed culturally through a language of suffering and deprivation at the hands of others who are outside certain defined boundaries of (negotiated) trust and belonging; those others change through history, and from one group to another. Wariness, as a cultural theme grows out of historical experience (for my oldest informants, this is the third war in their life times which has been fought on their soil), and for many, to a more immediate experience of shortages and inflation, and within families where grandparents take important roles in child care and in passing on cultural values (Gilliland 1986; Olsen 1989, 1990).

If the war was not initially primarily an ethnic one, it has certainly become so. The second question I pose is why this is the case? Why is conflict expressed in nationalist terms, rather than, for example, as class conflict, or a (primarily) religious war (it is that too, but religion is one of the powerful symbols of nationality, rather than the other way around). What processes-social, cultural and psychological, produce the horrors of death camps and ethnic cleansing? Is this, as so many claim, an inevitable part of "Balkan" culture?

A third question is raised, and that is the importance of place. According Rodman (1992) "place" has been given little attention in the anthropological literature, except as localities where (ethnographic) events occur. This paper raises the problem of "place" in two ways. First, association with place is more than an attachment to a

locality where one lives or works; "sense of place", that is sentiment, and (less often addressed) symbolic associations to place are important dimensions of group and personal identities. Here I discuss the shift from identities associated with place (in the 1980's) to identities associated primarily with ethnicity (in the 1990's), assumed to have cultural, religious and historic, as well as bio-genetic components. These dimensions of identity are qualitatively different, though by no means polar extremes. In general, however, identities based on place are not necessarily linked, in Yugoslavia or its former territories, with powerful symbols, such as the notion of shared "blood" or kinship (in the broader sense of a biologically-related ethnic group), or with religion, or selective histories which emphasize both heroic events and persecution; identities based on ethnicity are.

Place is important symbolically in the larger claims made by members of national groups eager to distinguish themselves from those they designate other. Croats, for example, point out that while Croats, Serbs and Bosnian Muslims are all Southern Slavs, the Croats are historically and culturally more like Austrians, Hungarians and other Western Europeans than they are like Serbs. Serbs and Muslims, Croats argue, belong historically and culturally to Turkey or the Near East (Bakic-Hayden and Hayden 1990). This symbolic geography seeks to deny cultural overlap or similarity among the groups, an effective defense in creating distance among competing groups.

Shifting Boundaries:

My original research focussed on questions of social change and cultural persistence in families and small communities. I was interested in family relationships and the roles and experiences of women at home, in their neighborhoods and at work. Theoretically I was concerned not only with the behavior of household groups, but with the symbolic construction of concepts of family and household and notions of belonging to neighborhood groups, or a group of friends (Gilliland 1986; see also Baric 1967; Denich 1977; Erlich 1966; Halpern 1963, 1965, 1967, 1969; Halpern and Halpern 1986; Hammel 1972; Hammel and Yarbrough 1973; Simic 1972, 1982, 1983).

In Slavonski Brod before 1990, the interests of families, households and personal networks (*drustva* and *veze*) took precedence over those of national affiliations, particularly among people who were ethnically mixed. I describe elsewhere concerns that focus on family, household and network boundaries (Olsen 1989; Olsen 1990). To be

socially viable, these groups must allow the entry of new members. This raised questions, even in the early 1980's and before, of the degree to which outsiders could be trusted. This included women marrying into families, new colleagues and friends. I have argued that the drawing of very close boundaries, the emphasis on the family, household and kin group, and on the local community or immediate personal networks, were survival strategies known to the oldest members of families from earlier remembered days of hardship and war (Gilliland 1986; Olsen 1990).

The new construction (or re-construction) of nationalities is accomplished through a language of belonging familiar from recent and historical past. The right to protect the interests of oneself and other members of a salient social group is expressed in part through metaphors of suffering, deprivation and self-sacrifice (Olsen, Rudan and Spoljar-Vrzina 1992). This language is used in public discourse to justify behavior, rightly or wrongly, on all sides of the current political crisis. It is the same language of protest, justification and claim to privileged status used in families. Women, particularly, make claims to moral superiority based upon self-sacrifice (Breuner 1992; Gilliland 1986; Olsen 1989; Olsen et. al. 1992).

Though the focus of my work was never nationality, as a social or cultural phenomenon, the word "nationality" is today inextricably linked with the names "Yugoslavia, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia" and other of the South Slav territories. The question which lies at the heart of this paper is a simple one: to what extent is the war in the Balkans a nationalist one? My friends and informants from Brod and elsewhere in Croatia claim that it is not primarily ethnic. My own impressions in Croatia ten years ago were that nationality was not a salient social concern. Perhaps my particular experience, and that of many of my friends, is colored by the fact that Slavonski Brod is a town on the border; also in Croatia but with a substantial Serbian population. Though interested in the relations between social conditions and individual behavior and motivations, my analysis here is first historic and economic. Material conditions shape, to some extent, the parameters of choice. Within these parameters, individual agents negotiate cultural understandings and make symbolic claims pertinent to personal and group identity.

Slavonski Brod, A Town on the Border:

Brod is located in Slavonia in Eastern Croatia. It is on the river Sava, nearly halfway between Zagreb and Beograd,

and on the border with Bosnia-Herzegovina. The town of Bosanski Brod is directly across the river from Slavonski Brod. Before a bridge was built, these two towns had ferry landings: and thus their names. "Brod" means ship or less literally, ferry. [The title of this paper is taken from a book written fifty years ago, during the Second World War. *The Bridge on the Drina* (Andric 1977) is about another town, also on a river, and about ethnic conflict and cooperation.].

The region of Slavonia is included within the Pannonian Plain, a fertile agricultural basin which extends into Hungary (local people joke that the highest hill is a pumpkin). The area was in the 1980's and still is dominated by productive family farms. The town of Brod dates to Roman times, then known as "Marsonia". It has been primarily a military outpost and a market center (Rubic 1953). Since before the First World War there has been a large factory manufacturing railroad equipment. The population of Brod and of Slavonia is dominated by Croats, but there was a rich ethnic mix. In 1981, out of 160,800 residents in Slavonia, there were 124,800 Croats, and 22,000 Serbs. The population also included 2,500 Hungarians, 1,700 Czechs, 750 Slovenes, 150 Muslims and 900 "Other" which category includes Albanians and Roma, or gypsies (Popis Stanovnistva 1983). The fact that this is a heterogeneous region, a kind of Slavic Borderland, may well have biased my own perspectives on nationality question.

In the early 1980's, contrary to my own expectations, people rarely spoke of nationality. That is not necessarily an indication that it was unimportant, but it probably does mean something. Serbs, Croats and others in the region were as much attached to the town of Brod as to ethnic nationality. They expressed this attachment in their language, a language of sentiment, in self-identification as "Slavonians", or "people from Slavonia", and in participation in events and activities linked to local culture and history, such as state-sponsored folklore groups. Mixed marriages were not uncommon (I attended five weddings in 1983, and two of these were between a Croat and a Serb. In one case the bride was Serb and the groom Croat. In a second case, the situation was reversed.) People were separated more by class than by ethnicity or nationality.

On my first visit to Brod, at the invitation of a Yugoslav friend (whose father was a Serb originally from Lika, and whose mother was half Croat-half Serb, originally from Bosnia). I spent a lazy afternoon eating fried fish with my friend's mother and sister, and later drinking Turkish

coffee in a neighbor's garden, perched on wooden stools under the shade of young willows. I accompanied Braco and members of his established group of friends (*drustvo*) to town in the evening. We walked in the korzo, making circle after circle in the town square, filled in the evenings with young people out for a good time. Friends greeted each other, made comments about clothing, companions and activities of others, discussed plans to go watch a film, listen to music or drink wine and talk. I learned in the next few days there that the various people I had met, and particularly groups of relatives, neighbors and friends whose social gatherings I shared, were not all Croat, though Brod is a Croatian town; some were Serbs, some identified themselves as "Bosnians", though they would now describe themselves most likely as Bosnian Serbs, and less likely as Bosnian Muslims or Catholics. Still others, though only a few, were Slovenian or Hungarian. People seemed interested in ethnicity as a part of their total identity, but not centrally so. The topic was raised only tangentially in

conversation (by my host's neighbor, who mentioned that she came from Slovenia, to the north; I took the opportunity to inquire further.)

In the early 1980's, even after Tito's death, there was in Slavonski Brod a lingering cult of Tito. Photographs of Tito hung in every place of business, and in many homes. Tito's birthday celebration, also known as National Youth Day, was one of the big events of the year. Partisan war films were a regular feature of a state-run television network. These films often reduced my landlady to tears. I saw other middle-aged women weep, also, when they saw photos of Tito, or discussed partisan films they had seen. A young mother of 25 years held her two- year-old daughter up to see a picture of Tito on a neighbor's wall. "That's Tito," she told her daughter with a very positive and gentle tone of voice. Each night the television broadcast in Eastern Croatia ended with the chorus of a song: "Comrade Tito, we follow in your ways."

The interest in Tito may have been only outward for some. The photos were particularly common in the houses of communists. In this region, at that particular time, however, it seemed there were more people with communist leanings than otherwise. I recall a village family who lived near Brod. On their kitchen wall a portrait of Tito hung next to a religious calendar. This was one of the few families I knew where at least some members professed to be both communist and Catholic. One of my neighbors held similar views. "If Jesus were alive today," she said, "he would be a communist." Those

who seemed truly to support communism and the state believed that their lives were better than those of their parents and grandparents. Many of them also believed that things would continue to improve. Their optimism focussed on matters of the economy despite strong evidence to the contrary.

Some scholars claim that all efforts to foster a Yugoslav national identity were doomed to failure from the start, except among those who were products of mixed marriages. The educational system promoted a Yugoslav and socialist world view but in homogeneous regions (for example, the island of Hvar in the Eastern Adriatic region of Croatia, where I worked in 1991), family, church and community influences tended to insure that many regarded themselves as Croats first, and Yugoslavs second, if at all. In a town like Brod, however, there were many who were products of mixed marriages, or whose families had migrated from elsewhere. Furthermore, there was no obvious advantage to being Croat or Serb. In such situations, ethnicity as a dimension of personal and group identity tends to lessen in value. (Muslims by contrast represented only a very small minority, and were regarded differently by both Croats and Serbs. I address this difference later.) Nina, who lived with her parents and was my neighbor in 1982, reminded me in a recent letter that from her perspective things had been different in the past. "We were Yugoslavs," she wrote. "My generation grew up believing that." Nina is now coming to terms with a new sense of who she is. We never talked much about ethnicity before, though she was proud of her "Bosnian" grandmother, who turns out to be a Serb, not a Muslim. Nina herself claims that she never thought much about whether her friends were Croat or Serb or Muslim or Catholic; in those days few people in Brod proper were religious, and none of that really "mattered". Now, of course, it most certainly does. (In fact, religion did matter to people who wanted to practice their religion openly; while old people did, young people felt they would suffer economically, i.e. not advance at their jobs, if they did so.) Nina recalled a wedding we had both attended in 1983; I had been one of the few guests who knew what to do at a Catholic Mass. Nina, and many of our other friends had to follow my lead. They were all greatly amused, since it was usually I who did not know what to do in social situations.

Nina's biological father was a Serb, but she was raised by a Croatian step-father. She speaks a Croatian dialect, writes with the Roman, not the Cyrillic script, and dated both Croatian and Serbian men before marrying her husband, who is Croat. When their children were born,

they wrote "Yugoslav" for the children's nationality. Nina wrote just after Croatian declaration of independence, in August 1991, that she would have to change the children's nationality to "Croat"; "Yugoslav" was no longer a possible national category in Croatia. Croatia now had to make a choice about the children's nationality; "Yugoslav" was no longer a possible national category in Croatia.

Ethnic Conflict and Cooperation:

In 1945, Ivo Andric, a Bosnian Serb, published a novel for which he was awarded a Nobel Prize in Literature. The novel is a story about Visegrad, in the heart of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The town is divided by a river, the Drina, and the story begins with the construction of a bridge. It is an unusual novel in the sense that the only enduring character is the bridge itself, which links, initially, the Turkish community with a Serbian community across the river. Later, the bridge separates or unites, in cycles of cooperation and conflict, Muslims, Serbs, Croats, Hungarians, Jews and others who come into the region through 500 years of history. Governments, local politicians, families and local characters come and go, as does ethnic domination and subordination, but the bridge remains. Change occurs, the cultural content of the groups who identify themselves as different nationalities converge (not to imply that culture is ever very perfectly shared or internally consistent); but the ethnic boundaries, the emblems or markers or difference, remain. People perceive themselves as separate, distinct, particularly in periods of hardship or crisis.

I read Andric's novel many years ago, and re-read it recently. It reminded me of Slavonski Brod, located on the Sava River in Croatia, on the Bosnian border. One could drive or walk across the Sava by means of a bridge, and in that way, travel from Croatia to Bosnia and back again. Some people did this every day, living in one place, and working in another. Now, however, the bridge is gone, one of the less precious casualties of war. The entire region, a "borderland" is contested territory, and has been involved in both the war between Croats and the Federal army dominated by Serbs, and now to an even greater extent in the contest for control of Bosnia.

A particular passage, in which Andric describes life in the town of Visegrad after the Ottoman Turks were ousted and a new government, the Austrian Hapsburgs, came to power, reminded me of what Brod must have been like

after World War II, and even what it was like when I lived there ten years ago.

After the first years of distrust, misunderstanding and hesitation, when the first feeling of transience has passed, the town began to find its place in the new order of things. The people found work, order, security. That was enough to ensure that here too life, outward life at least, set out "on the road of perfection and progress". Everything else was flushed away into that dark background of consciousness where live and ferment the basic feelings and indestructible beliefs of individual races, faiths and castes, which, to all appearances dead and buried, are preparing for later far-off time unsuspected changes and catastrophes, without which, it seems people cannot exist and above all the peoples of this land (Andric 1977:173-4).

In the 1980's in Brod, there was the appearance of peace and progress, an overriding optimism, though under the surface tensions were evident.

Economy and Ethnicity:

The tensions to which I refer above appeared to be economic, not ethnic. One of the hallmarks of Tito's communism was decentralization (except in the army, in foreign policy, and other areas of general national concern). In the early 1980's, there was much talk about Yugoslavia's hard currency debt. My neighbors in Brod understood that each of the republics had managed their internal financial matters independently from one another, with little communication. Western nations required repayment of the large debts. Thus, the lack of hard currency became a serious problem. The dinar had been repeatedly devalued. In 1981, after Tito's death, an austerity program was begun. There was a policy of limiting imports and forcing exports. As a part of that, a system of rationing gasoline, coffee, laundry detergent was instituted in 1982, shortly after I arrived to take up residence and carry out research. A further restriction was placed on foreign travel. This was intended to limit the use of hard currency abroad, and to restrict black marketeering, particularly in coffee, detergent and denim and leather clothing.

The average salary then for a family of four, was approximately \$150.00 per month. Nina, who had been working for 2 years as a bookkeeper for a state-run hospitality firm, made only \$80.00 per month. Her step-father, a clerk, had a monthly salary of \$110.00. My landlady, a bookkeeper with some administrative duties, made just over \$100.00 per month. A loaf of bread cost

20 cents, as did a cup of coffee or a beer in a cafe; rent on a state-subsidized flat was about \$10.00 per month, and a pair of leather shoes about \$20.00. One could travel from Brod to Zagreb by train or bus (a 3-hour ride) for \$2-3 one way. Shortages became increasingly common. Some items, such as coffee and detergent, could only be purchased periodically, with ration coupons. The purchase of gasoline, and in other regions, cooking oil and sugar, were also restricted. Other items, including chocolate, toothpaste and nylon stockings, were available only randomly, and sometimes disappeared from the store shelves for months on end. People in this region had always relied on networks of relatives and friends, who provided access to goods, services, jobs, housing and other needed or desired commodities. At this time they were not entirely necessary (though in some cases, they could be a help), but people began to worry more and more about the declining availability of goods, and the shrinking power of the dinar. This encouraged an attitude towards government which had existed before; people like the grandmother in my own household distrusted any government. She had seen several collapse, and had survived the wars that followed. It encouraged people with government jobs, or access to anything in short supply, to steal, or cheat for their friends, whenever possible. [In the 1980's, there was a shortage of housing and of jobs (people had to wait on lists for several years after they finished school), but once an apartment or a job were acquired, they were impossible to lose.] These attitudes, and the practice of helping relatives and friends, did not disappear during the Tito era. According to stories I was told, people continued to look out for their self-interests in these ways. Networks, however, became particularly important during difficult times.

Still, there was optimism. At the time, in a town such as Brod which was relatively prosperous, and in nearby villages which were also economically stable (because agriculture provided a reliable source of income) people did not have to worry about basic survival. People did worry, however, particularly concerning children who remained without housing or jobs. They worried as well about rising costs and increasing scarcity of some consumer goods. Still new houses were built, young people went out in town nightly, new clothing was purchased, and most everyone could afford a vacation within Yugoslavia. These were working class and middle class people (lower-level professionals), among whom the standard of living varied little. There was very little outright poverty in the region, aside from Roma who were marginalized. There was also little outright wealth, except among local political leaders, who might have foreign

cars or weekend houses or other status symbols others could not afford. None of these individuals in Brod, however, lived outrageously beyond the potential reach of an ordinary family; it was not unrealistic for people to hope. The goal of the austerity program, ironically, was to stabilize the national debt by 1991. Even at the end of 1983, however, the people in Brod believed the program would not succeed. By then, a new system of rationing included electricity. The town was divided into three districts. Each day one of these districts was without electricity from 2 till 11 p.m. This plan was tolerated at first, was even a source of hilarity among some. Older folks noticed that it promoted more visiting and talking in the evenings, when people couldn't watch television, or went to another part of town, to watch with a relative or friend. In a very short time, however, this particular form of rationing began to irritate people. My landlady had purchased a deep freeze with the dollars I paid her for rent. In late summer, we killed and plucked 50 chickens, and she froze these to see her family through the next winter. Of course, the chickens partially thawed every third day, and she feared they would spoil. This represented a large financial investment, and an important source of material security. The tolerance for any system of rationing dwindled. Before the end of the year, the system had disappeared. By the time I left Yugoslavia then, in November of 1983, coffee and other luxury items were once again available in stores, but at much higher prices. People complained; they had not anticipated the inflation.

By the time I returned in February of 1991, the dinar had been devalued twice. Then a "2" dinar note (a new note) was worth the same as an older "20,000" dinar note. Pensions and other "fixed" incomes were barely adjusted to accommodate the inflation. Many received their salaries in theory only; at my institute people did not receive a check every pay period. Some- times they only received half the amount they were due. Other organizations gave their workers envelopes with IOU's inside. Discontent was rising as were prices. People who lived in Zagreb now drove to Graz (Austria, 3 hours by car) to buy groceries. They did this despite the high cost of gasoline (which was no longer rationed. Trips to Italy or Hungary for clothing and household goods were not uncommon. Inflation, unemployment and the widening gap were evident. This becomes a source of friction and anxiety in every day life.

Resurgence of Nationalism:

In 1990, there was talk in Croatia of creating a confederacy, or of outright secession from Yugoslavia. My friends and colleagues in Zagreb were angered by the economic muddle. They argued that the wealth of the country was concentrated in the north and west. The Adriatic coast generated tourist dollars and deutschmarks. Mineral resources were concentrated in the west, as was industry and business. Some claimed that as much as 70% of their gross income (as a republic) was taxed by the federal government. This was supposedly to help the development of poorer regions, to the east and south. Some began to suspect, however, that their taxes, their labor and wealth, were supporting an increasingly corrupt government, and a too-large army.

This suspicion was encouraged by Franjo Tudjman, then President of the Croatian Republic. Croatia, under Tudjman, reinstituted many powerful symbols of Croatian nationalism, such as the old checkered Croatian flag which then began to appear throughout the Croatian Republic. The names of streets, squares and other public places were changed from those of socialist heroes to Croatian ones. Croats had believed for a long time they were receiving an unfairly small portion of the national pie. There was increasing desire for self-determination and self government. This desire was not universal among Croats, nor was it uniformly resisted among Serbs and other minority nationals in Croatia, though members of non-Croatian nationalities, particularly in places like Brod, began to be afraid.

The official Serbian response was not to block independence for its own sake, but to protest that Serbian enclaves in Croatia had not been guaranteed any rights. The Serbs demanded a clear policy of protection for their own people. (Croatian news sources pointed out that this was also the justification for aggression against Albanians in Kosovo, protection of a Serbian minority there.) Croats, however, claim that Serbian leaders were more afraid of losing their jobs, than they were of Croats. Individual Serbs, however, did begin to fear. The grandmother in the household I had lived in 1982, herself a Bosnian Catholic, had married a Bosnian Serb in the period between the two world wars. This man had been killed at the outbreak of the Second World War by Croatian Ustasi. Ana then was 27 years old, had eight children to support, and a first grade education. When I knew the family in the 1980's, they spoke of Yugoslavs as a united people. Ana's daughter, the one with whom I lived, was a member of the Communist Party. Their history was the history of socialist Yugoslavia. But the family maintained another history; the story of Ana's

husband's death at the hands of (or so they believed) Ustasi which persisted as a family legend. This was in spite of the fact that Ana herself was Croat, and lived then in Croatia. Killings such as this one were part of the history of nearly every family - who is to blame varies.

Nationality and "History":

It is beginning to look as if nationality and territory or "place" coincide. Except in places where large national minorities reside, and mixed marriages are tolerated, this is true, to a large degree. The minority enclaves, for example, the Serb-dominated areas within Croatia, have in many cases existed prior to changes brought about under Tito. One result of the past 50 years, however, is increased physical mobility. People have moved from villages and small towns to cities, and in border regions, like Slavonia, from one republic to the next, because of jobs. For awhile all men were required to serve in the army for one year. This service was performed in another republic. My observations in Brod led me to conclude that this practice was partly responsible for greater intermarriage than ever before in the history of Yugoslavia. This increased mobility, and intermarriage means that there are individuals scattered throughout the Southern Slav territories who do not "ethnically" belong where they live. This may, in fact, be a very small number of individuals, and may be more pronounced in a border town, such as Brod.

Furthermore, the nationality conflict is not so clear cut; the lines are not so neatly drawn. Not all Serbs in Croatia were against the independence movements. Though I have no reliable numbers, I am told by Croatian colleagues (quoting Croatian news sources, which tend to be biased) that out of approximately 15% of the Serbian nationals living in Croatia, reportedly only one- fifth fought with Serbs against Croats. The remaining four-fifths were in favor of an independent Croatian state. Some, like my former neighbor Nina, were against the independence movement at the start. Although she is Serb, she feels that her current situation can largely be blamed on Serbian aggression in Croatia. Serbian bombs struck her parents' house. Although no one was seriously injured, Nina became afraid for the safety of her children. Her husband had been working in Rijuka. He urged her to leave Brod, and to bring the children to live with him in a worker's camp. Nina became convinced, over time, that (at the time of war in Croatia) the Federal government was in the wrong.

Braco, my former landlady's son, had been at one time a true believer in communism and Yugoslavia. He is Serb. His wife is Croat. He openly sided with the movement for Croatian

independence. He had his son baptized Roman Catholic. He hoped there would be a future for his family in an independent Croatia. By the end of 1991, however, he became completely disillusioned. Soon after the war in Croatia began, Braco took his family and a few possessions, abandoned their house and remaining property, and fled to Italy, where they now reside on refugee visas. His male cousins are fighting with the Serbs against the Bosnians; his wife's family live in fear of Serbian bombs. (It is his cousin, Draga, whose letter is referred to earlier in this paper.)

In the same way, not all Croats, Slovenes or now Muslim Bosnians, were clearly for secession. Some, including a number of individuals I knew in Zagreb in 1991, would initially have preferred some political compromise to Croatian independence.

The question arises, then, why the discontent over economic and political power has turned to nationalist violence. Rape of women, violence against children and the elderly, the destruction of cultural monuments and the killing of intellectuals indicate hatred that goes beyond a desire for political and economic reform. I suggest here that there are economic, political and social motivations for change in Croatia, and in Bosnia. I also suggest several variables which begin to answer the question regarding what I maintain is a regeneration of nationalism.

Nationalism and History:

People have begun to talk again of a history prior to the Second World War. The notion of a unified Yugoslavia, a nation of Southern Slavs who shared a common past and future, was predicated largely on the events of the Second World War, the success of Tito and his partisans, a nationally mixed group. The media, political leaders and individuals, began to talk about another time, other histories. The times they invoked and the events, depended on the claims they wished to further. Croats claimed that Mostar, which had belonged to Croatia in the 11th century, should really be a part of Croatia now. Serbs began to speak of Greater Serbia, which according to their views of history, included the Dalmatian coast, and Bosnia. Who did what during the Second World War, the ratio of Croats to Serbs in the partisan army, traditions of "democracy and hard work" as opposed to

"authoritarianism and patronage" were invoked in heated discussions, television interviews and films. Religious holidays became once again important, primarily as markers of national identity. Weddings, baptisms, funerals began more often to be associated with church services (Olsen, in press). Selective histories, religion, national (rather than the federal Yugoslav) flags, the changes of public place names-these and other very powerful symbols were promoted particularly by the media (heavily censored on all sides).

The first instances of nationalist violence in the early winter of 1991 were also aired on television. Each side was eager to show mutilated bodies. This was very effective in rousing anti-Serb feelings among Croats, and undoubtedly was used in a similar way in other republics. Living in Zagreb, I had access primarily to Croatian news. I had occasion, however, to travel to Beograd in and received information about the media second-hand, from individuals living in Serbia, including Serbs and Americans. The media continues to play a central role in the ongoing war (as evidenced by the letter I received from Draga, in Serbia, who claims to know nothing about the atrocities committed by Serbs and denies the truth of such reports.).

People redefined themselves. "Slavonians" became Croats, Serbs or Muslims. In 1980, I knew many "Bosnians". this term is now politically incorrect, or rather inaccurate. Bosnia is comprised of people who are Roman Catholic (Croat), Orthodox (Serb) or Muslim. Now we hear about Bosnian Serbs or Muslims or Croats. The associations with "place" have become secondary. This creates particularly great tension in places like Slavonia, where several groups have lived together, and now find themselves in conflict because of nationality, even if politically they are in agreement.

Doing Ethnography:

I claimed earlier that in 1982 and 1983, nationality was relatively unimportant. People then spoke daily of economic matters. A great deal of attention was paid to the cost and availability of certain items, and to the cultivation of networks which would provide access to goods, services or jobs. It was many months into my research then, before I began to learn about my neighbor's ethnic histories. There were a few incidents where ethnicity or religious affiliation were mentioned in argumentative discussions. My landlady's great-aunt insisted she spoke Croatian, not Serbo-Croatian or the Yugoslav language as it was commonly then called. The

celebration of a wedding between a Bosnian Serb and a Croat was nearly ruined by hostility between the families, expressed initially as crude jokes, and later as open ethnic prejudice. This particular case points out a the difference between neighborly co-existence and the continued intolerance by some of marriage across national boundaries. At the time, however, these incidents appeared to be isolated ones. The majority nationality in Slavonski Brod was Croatian, but there was a substantial Serbian populations as well. As mentioned earlier, social ties often crossed ethnic lines. Even occasions which were specific to one ethnic or religious group or another, were often attended by neighbors, friends and affines who were not of that group (Olsen, in press).

When I look back on my notes, however, and recall conversations, there are indications of lingering ethnic prejudice under the surface of good relations. There was an implicit hierarchy in which gypsies hardly counted, and Albanians were only a little better. Muslims were clearly regarded by some as inferior to Croats or Serbs. My landlady's sister-in-law had married a Muslim whom the family never entirely accepted. While this man was active in the community, and treated as an equal by his neighbors and near associates, comments behind his back about his lack of initiative (a comment traditionally made about ethnic minorities) were not uncommon. A young man who brought back a bride from Kosovo (where he served in the army) was ostracized by his parents. Jokes were made at the expense of Bosnian Muslims, a good indication that Serbs and Croats regarded them with ambivalence at best. Anti-Muslim sentiments may have been a source of solidarity between Serbs and Croats. My adopted grandmother said that Muslims in a village near her own, had provided her with food and shelter when she had to flee her own home during the Second World War. Because she was a Catholic, it surprised her they had done so. A neighbor explained to me early in my stay that Muslims "married four wives". Even this erroneous fact was enough for her to describe them as "animals," not even human, and justified her disdain, at least in her own eyes.

At the other end of the scale, Croats did not regard Slovenians or Hungarians as ethnic groups to be singled out. Sometimes Slovenians were said to be "colder" than other Slavs, "more like Germans". This explanation was given often for the unwillingness of one of my neighbors to participate in gossip. There were jokes made about the ways in which Hungarians spoke Serbo-Croatian (their confusion about gender was exaggerated). It was more often the case, however, that Slovenes or Hungarians

differentiated themselves from others (with a note of superiority).

While good relations generally held between Serbs and Croats, people still sometimes made comments in private about the events of the Second World War. In 1982, the names "Ustasa" or "Cetnik" were not spoken publicly, as a rule, but the stories of personal losses were recounted in private, as described earlier. In 1991, however, covert references to these groups were made in public, and used by Croats and Serbs to dehumanize each other and justify first separateness, and then, violence.

Conclusion:

At this point in time, I question my own understanding of the salience of nationality in Croatia ten years ago. Long term research is certainly indicated to try to understand the changes that seem to have taken place in a very short time. Still I maintain that nationality was less significant ten years ago than it is today, at least in a region such as Brod. In 1991, I carried out research with Croatian colleagues on the island of Hvar. There the population was more homogeneous, more firmly in favor of a separate Croatia. Even there, however, people disagreed, and within a period of six months, some of the people I knew changed their views.

Local understandings of cultural processes, and the attention paid to a diversity of voices, place events such as the current Balkan war in broader historical and social contexts. It is situations such as these which underscore the important contributions anthropologists and anthropological theory can potentially make.

Many times in this essay I have remarked that the war began in Croatia primarily for economic and political reasons. What I have failed to explain, and what is most distressing, is how people move from a disagreement about who should control what resources to hatred based on nationalism. There are those who did not hate at the outset, but were fearful for the well-being of their families. Some if not many have come to express the conflict in nationalist terms. This is not the first time there has been violent conflict among Croats, Muslims and Serbs. Economic and political variables may explain, in part, the escalation of violence in the current war. For other explanations we must look to the history of Yugoslavia, in particular, and to the histories of other peoples and nations who have engaged each other in war.

References Cited:

- Andric, Ivo
1977 (1945) *The Bridge on the Drina*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bakic-Hayden, Milica and Robert M. Hayden
1990 Orientalist Variations on the Theme "Balkans": Symbolic Geography in Yugoslav Cultural Politics Since 1987. Revised version of papers presented at the annual meetings of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (Washington, D.C) and the American Anthropological Association (New Orleans, LA 1990).
- Baric, Lorraine
1967 Traditional Groups and New Economic Opportunities in Rural Yugoslavia. In Raymond Firth, Ed., *Themes in Economic Anthropology*. London: Tavistock Publications. pp. 253-281.
- Breuner, Nancy F.
1992 The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Southern Italy and Spain. *Ethos*, Vol. 1, No. 20, pp. 66-95.
- Denich, Bette S.
1977 Women, Work and Power in Modern Yugoslavia in Alice Schlegel, Ed., *Sexual Stratification*. New York: Columbia University Press. pp. 215-244.
- Devereaux, George
1975 Ethnic Identity: Its Logical Foundations and its Dysfunctions in George DeVos and Lola Romanucci-Ross, Eds., *Ethnic Identity: Cultural Continuities and Change*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 42-70.
- DeVos, George
1975 Ethnic Pluralism: Conflict and Accommodation in George DeVos and Lola Romanucci-Ross, Eds., *Ethnic Identity: Cultural Continuities and Change*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 5-41.
- Erlich, Vera St.
1966 *Family in Transition: A Study of 300 Yugoslav Villages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Gilliland, M.K. (see also M.K.G. Olsen)
1986 *The Maintenance of Family Values in a Yugoslav Town*. Ph.D. Dissertation in Anthropology, University of California, San Diego.
- Halpern, Joel M.
1963 Yugoslav Peasant Society in Transition - Stability in Change. *Anthropological Quarterly* 36:156-182.
1965 Peasant Culture and Urbanization in Yugoslavia. *Human Organization* 24:162-174.
1967 Farming as a Way of Life: Yugoslav Peasant Attitudes in Jerzy Karcz, Ed., *Proceedings of the Conference on Soviet and East European Agriculture*. Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. 356-384.
1969 (1958) *A Serbian Village*. New York: Harper.
- Halpern, Joel M. and Barbara Kerewsky-Halpern
1986 (1972) *A Serbian Village in Historical Perspective*. Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Hammel, E.A.
1972 The Zadruga as Process. In Peter Laslett and Richard Wall, Eds., *Household and Family in Past Time*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hammel, E.A. and C. Yarbrough
1973 Social Mobility and the Durability of Family Ties. *Journal of Anthropological Research*. 29:145-63.
- Jelavich, Charles
1990 *South Slav Nationalisms: Textbooks and Yugoslav Union Before 1914*. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press.
- McKay, James and Frank Lewins
1978 Ethnicity and the Ethnic Group: A Conceptual Analysis and Reformulation, in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 1978:1:412-27.
- Olsen, M.K.G.
1989 Authority and Conflict in Slavonian Households: The Effects of Social Environment on Intra-Household Processes, in R. Wilk, Ed., *The Household Economy: Reconsidering the Domestic Mode of Production*. Colorado: Westview Press. pp. 149-170.
1990 Redefining Gender in Rural Yugoslavia: Masculine and Feminine Ideals in Ritual Context. *East European Quarterly* 23:4:431-444.
1993 Domestic Ritual and Household Culture: Eastern Croatia 1981-1991, In E. Arnould, Ed., *Domestic Ritual and Household Culture*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press. In press.
- Olsen, M.K.G. and Vlasta Rudan
1992 Childlessness and Gender: Example from the Island of Hvar. *Collegium Antropologicum* 16:1:115-124.
- Popis stanovništva i stanova (Census records)
1981 31.iii.1981. Republički zavod za statistiku SR Hrvatska. Zagreb 1983.

Rodman, Margaret C.
1992 Empowering Place: Multilocality and
Multivocality. *American Anthropologist* 94:3:640-656.

Rubic, Ivo
1953. Slavonski i Bosanski Brod. Zbornik za narodni
zivot i obicaje juznih slavena. Jugoslavenska akademija
znanosti i umjetnosti. Zagreb. god. 36.

Simic, Andrei
1972 *The Peasant Urbanites: A Study of Rural-Urban
Mobility in Serbia*. New York: Seminar Press.
1982 Urbanization and Modernization in Yugoslavia:
Adaptive and Maladaptive Aspects of Traditional Culture.
In M. Kenny and D. Kertzer, Eds., *Urban Life in
Mediterranean Europe*. Urbana: University of Illinois
Press. pp. 203-224.
1983 Machismo and Cryptomatriarchy: Power, Affect
and Authority in the Contemporary Yugoslav Family.
Ethos 11:1/2:66-86.