



REVIEW ESSAY

Images of Yugoslavia: Past and Present

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Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed Idea, 1918-1992

Dejan Djokic, ed.

C. Hurst&Co., 2003

Hbk: ISBN – 1-85065-662-2 £45.00

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pp. 356 (incl.: preface, maps, index)

Fools' Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO and Western Delusions

Diana Johnstone

Pluto Press, 2002

Hbk: ISBN – 0-7453-1951-3 £45.00

Pbk: ISBN – 0-7453-1950-5 £16.99

pp. 317 (incl.: notes, index)

Ideology, Legitimacy and the New State: Yugoslavia, Serbia and Croatia

Siniša Malešević

Frank Cass, 2002

Hbk: ISBN – 0-7146-5215-6 £42.50

pp. 338 (incl.: preface, notes, bibliography, index)

Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States

Vjekoslav Perica

Oxford University Press, 2002

Hbk: ISBN – 0-19-514856-8 £24.99

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pp. 363 (incl.: preface, chronology, maps, notes, selected bibliography, index)

Intrastate ethnic warfare, the scourge of the post-Cold War decade, has been pushed to the background of world attention. As the threats posed by international terrorism and rogue states have captured public imagination, the horrors of ethnic conflict in places like the former Yugoslavia seem to be of a different era. But although the main characters in those dramas have passed from the scene and democratization has become a ubiquitous process in the region, the publication of works about that area has continued unabated. Former Yugoslavia remains on the academic map. Still, the almost frantic search for explanations has shifted toward more sober analyzing that tends to supplement, rather than explain, the existing literature.

At first sight, Siniša Malešević's analysis of ideological legitimization of the second Yugoslavia and independent Serbia and Croatia falls outside this pattern. The three cases highlight a post-revolutionary situation, in which a new governing elite faces the need to legitimize its rule in the new state and replace the ideology of the ancien régime with its own. At the center of this 'ideology transition' (p. 316) is the charismatic revolutionary authority personified in the figure of a Great Leader. In order to sustain their rule, the new leader and his party combine the power of his charisma with traditional values, symbols and myths to introduce the new ideas of their ideology, while disguising their rule in the mantle of legal-rational authority. As the memory of the revolution subsides among the populace and the charisma wears out as the principal source of legitimacy, in

order to entrench its rule the new power elite promotes its ideology to dominance by emphasizing the aspects of that ideology that are most appealing to the masses. The shift from charismatic to value-rational authority, whereby the elite's values expressed in the new dominant ideology are perceived by the masses as congruent, if not identical, with their own, is termed here as the ideologization of charisma.

Maleševic assumes the universality of ideology; ideology as 'any politically motivated or action-oriented set of ideas and practices related to the conceptual organization of society' (p. 48) is present in every state as an essential discursive reality that provides the power elite with a fundamental source of legitimacy. Maleševic distinguishes between two levels of ideology. Normative or official ideology, the content of which he analyzes from the ruling party manifestos, defines the fundamental principles that determine the society's final developmental goals. It operates with a universalist, abstract language of reason and its content circulates mainly within the elite as a self-affirmation of its legitimacy. By contrast, as an 'institutionalized mechanism of "narrative control"' (p. 75), operative ideology's simpler, more particularistic terms are more familiar to the masses and appeal to their collective sentiments, emotions and interests. Disseminated through the mass media and education system, operative ideology uses traditional terminology and symbolism to deliver the message of the normative ideology. When Maleševic finds that normative ideology is, on the normative level, ultimately translated into a form of nationalism, he affirms the universality of nationalism as the principal legitimizing ideology of modern states.

In investigating the ideologization of charisma, Maleševic focuses on the form and content of ideology. He persuasively shows the nature of its two levels and the relationship between their contents. However, with the next step, the functioning of ideology as a source of elite legitimacy, his analysis flounders. The concept of legitimacy links elite rule to the popular recognition of that rule as legitimate. Yet there is little evidence in the text for the popular acceptance of the dominant ideology as an underpinning of elite rule. Instead, after Maleševic admits the methodological difficulty of verifying this acceptance and consequently disclaims to analyze ideology's legitimizing function, he takes that acceptance for granted. The ideological brainwashing, electoral manipulation and the policies of repression and intimidation, often used in the name of the state's survival against external threats, are on the whole overlooked. At the same time, he presupposes a certain irrational predisposition of the nations in question, based on their traditional social hierarchies, to accepting strong leaders at their helm. Overall, the assumption seems to be simply that since an ideology became dominant, it was also accepted. Although Maleševic's unwillingness to establish the acceptance of elite ideology among the masses takes him only halfway toward explaining ideological legitimization of new states, his excellent content-based analysis of the multiple layers of dominant ideologies is a theory-oriented step in the right direction.

In Maleševic's framework, the Yugoslavism of the second Yugoslavia is an example of operative ideology. While he analyzes its content in the initial stage of the second Yugoslavia's existence, Dejan Djokic's edited volume traces the evolution of the concept throughout its entire history. Therefore, rather than being an ideology legitimizing a ruling elite's ascent to power at any point in time, the meaning of the term is diluted into a 'fluid concept, understood differently at different times by different Yugoslav nations, leaders and social groups.' (p. 4) This seems to be a natural conclusion for a historiographic work such as this one. Yet to trace the fate of Yugoslavism, both an integrationist ideology meant to override exclusive nationalisms and an overarching ethnic identity meant to efface the existing ethnic ones, as it became co-opted and assimilated by them only to be finally scraped as a viable model for national coexistence, is to parallel the development of the state it engendered.



The book's twenty-one chapters are grouped into five parts. The first part on context deals with the Yugoslav idea from its birth among Croatian intellectuals in 1830s to the end of the First World War. Rusinow's is the only chapter dealing with Yugoslavism before Yugoslavia came into existence. The detailed discussion of how Yugoslavism became interwoven with the main national ideologies to give birth to their common state provides a background to the subsequent chapters. The preoccupation of the other two chapters with the First World War provides for overlap in their content. Part Two tackles the ethnic nationalisms present in the former Yugoslav territory, illuminating the relationship of the national ideologies to the common state. While providing useful summaries of the constituent nations' shifting attachments to the common state, the texts in this part miss the opportunity, outlined in the opening chapter, to contrast Yugoslavism with particularistic ethnic nationalisms. Yugoslavism as a counterpart of particularistic nationalisms is dealt with only marginally. In the next part, on leaders and institutions, Dejan Djokic ties into the first part by discussing Yugoslavism among South Slav elites in the interwar period. Dejan Jovic's lucid account of the struggle between Tito's and Kardelj's concepts of Yugoslavism shows how the anti-statism of the latter contributed to undermining of the Yugoslav idea and the rise of ethnic nationalism in the country's republics. The chapter succeeds mainly in connecting the history of Yugoslavism to that of Yugoslavia, as it comes closest to offering an explanation of Yugoslavia's failure on the basis of its ideological foundation. Mile Bjelajac's chapter on the role of Yugoslavism in the military then comes as a useful, if not too brief, overview, while the remaining chapters on economy and religion touch upon the book's central concept only tangentially.

Part Four reflects the emergence of Yugoslavism from the intellectual sphere by discussing its fate among the intellectuals. The focus on the first and last periods of Yugoslavia's existence, present throughout the book, stands out here as well. In her investigation of the relationship of South Slav intellectuals to Yugoslavism as the idea behind the creation of Yugoslavia, Ljubinka Trgovcevic highlights the Christian element inherent in the ideology; Andrew Wachtel parallels the fate of synthetic Yugoslavism with the careers of Ivan Meštrovic and Ivo Andric; and Aleksandar Pavkovic discusses three versions of Yugoslavism that circulated among Serbian intellectuals after Tito's death. The final part purports to present the alternatives to Yugoslavism. Desimir Tošić's and Branko Horvat's chapter consist largely of translated manifestos, respectively, of the Democratic Alternative and the Association for Yugoslav Democratic Initiative. Similarly, Ramadan Marmullaku's personal essay on the Kosovo question and Aleksa Djilas's Yugonostalgic afterword provide for an interesting read but contribute little to the objective of the final part. The reader is thus left wondering whether there existed any alternatives to Yugoslavism apart from the ethnic nationalisms that defeated it.

The academic treatment of Yugoslavism has been, considering its centrality to the state legitimacy, surprisingly unsystematic and scattered. The book brings the loose ends together in a welcome synthesis, recording the historical transformation of Yugoslavism from a primarily ethnic concept to an ideological one, the shifts in its dominant interpretation as well as its competition with the national projects. These continual pressures facilitated Yugoslavism's failure to establish itself as an inclusive, civic ideology capable of defeating the exclusive ethnic nationalisms. The concept's structural flaws, its utilitarian artificiality, vagueness and ever-shifting meaning may therefore be in part responsible for the volume's lack of focus on Yugoslavism as a distinct analytical category. The chapters summarizing various aspects of Yugoslavia's history treat Yugoslavism only as an afterthought. Finally, reminiscent of Malešević's analysis, Yugoslavism is presented as an elite matter. References to popular identification with Yugoslavism, or lack thereof, appear solely in a few footnotes as select census data. While the creation and modification of ideology is always an elite domain, the omission of

the mass element from the discussion of Yugoslavism suggests the principal reason for that ideology's ultimate downfall.

By contrast, in Vjekoslav Perica's *Balkan Ghosts*, Yugoslavism is revealed as the 'Yugoslav civil religion of brotherhood and unity' (p. 89). In a single chapter devoted to this issue, Perica demonstrates the manifestations of the Yugoslav regime's legitimacy more plausibly than Malešević's and Djokic's volumes combined. Similar to Malešević's analysis of operative ideologies, Perica puts an emphasis on the affective element of nationalism. However, in this 'first political history of religion' in Yugoslavia (p. ix), nationalism and religion appear as two sides of the same coin. Such a 'civil religion' reflects the similarity between and fusion of religious and secular national symbols, rituals and myths in a 'public patriotic worship' (p. 5) of the nation. This merging of national and religious identity defines the objective of Perica's monograph: rather than attempting to explain the dissolution of Yugoslavia by factors related to religion, the aim is to trace the influence of religious institutions on nation-formation and political legitimacy in Yugoslavia.

In a chronological account of the principal developments in Yugoslavia's churches, Perica documents their contribution to the construction of their respective ethnic nations and, consequently, to the destruction of interethnic harmony. In Perica's perspective, the congruence of ethnic, national and religious affiliations among Yugoslavia's constituent nations was the main factor of the country's instability. While this is not to suggest the existence of civilizational fault lines running across former Yugoslavia, religion is a crucial obstacle to successful state-building in multiethnic and multiconfessional states. More than instruments of political propaganda, the individual churches emerge as interest groups with their own agendas and objectives. Their aim is to attain state-wide 'religious monopoly' (p. 213), that is to become established as national churches in ethnically based national states. The religious hierarchy and the secular government legitimize each other, and their joint rule is claimed to ensure the survival of the ethnic nation. Reflecting the initial premise of his work, Perica's term for this phenomenon, ethnoclericalism, thus becomes an ideology that integrates both secular political and ecclesiastical elements. And while ethnoclericalism was strongest in the autocephalous Serbian Orthodox Church, it became a central, reactive feature of Croatian Catholicism and Bosnian Islam as well.

Through continual reinterpretation of history, the representatives of the church hierarchies ethnicized the religious and public discourse. Perica uses extensive evidence to trace the instruments of ecclesiastical mythmaking. Sermons, speeches, publications as well as the symbolism of shrines, saints, celebrations and rituals aimed to mold national identities by replacing history with mythical narratives. Perica convincingly details how the churches' manipulation of popular and official discourse in the exclusive ethnic direction took place throughout the entire history of Yugoslavia, and how, following their power objectives, the representatives of Yugoslavia's ethnic churches worked to undermine the legitimacy of the common state.

Subsequently, it was only when Yugoslavia ceased to exist that the churches emerged as the central elements of state legitimacy. In this respect, Perica's monograph serves as a complement to Malešević's analysis. The operative ideology in Malešević's Serbia and Croatia contained the affective elements adopted from the popular culture in order to attain the elite's legitimacy. Hence, the political establishment borrowed the traditional religious themes, and the religious institutions were only one of the instruments of disseminating the dominant ideology. By contrast, Perica suggests a much stronger influence of the churches on the new regimes. Church and state are intertwined to such a degree that they are almost indistinguishable: the state, the church and the nation cannot exist as separate entities. However, while the congruence of ethnic, national and



religious identity is a crucial element of post-Yugoslav nationalisms, ethnoclericalism sprang from the ethnic religious institutions pursuing their vested interests and did not become the dominant ideology. Governing political elites everywhere are always on guard against other actors impinging on their territory. Even if religion plays a major role in many types of contemporary nationalism, the establishment of legitimacy of modern states remains the domain of their governments.

Perica intermittently touches upon the role of external actors in the developments he follows. But while religious peacemaking contributed little to the international efforts to mitigate the Yugoslav conflicts of the 1990s, Diana Johnstone asserts that the international community's intervention was not only toothless in alleviating them but that it was their principal cause. International intervention in Yugoslavia was used by the United States in its pursuit of globalization as 'world economic domination by military means' (p. 268). Each chapter covers a broad issue, the discussion of which aims to support the main claims: responsibility for the Yugoslav wars, criminal justice, forms of nationalism in Yugoslavia, the role of Germany, the Kosovo case, and finally a chapter on the position of Yugoslav events in the global context. This technique makes Johnstone's a more dynamic and focused analysis than many chronological accounts. In each chapter, event by event, case by case, Johnstone sets out to debunk the collective fiction about the wars that was reinforced by the media and politicians to justify and promote the American hegemonic actions. Since her objective is to put the story in perspective by countering and remedying Western propaganda through an unorthodox interpretation of the events, her argumentation allows her to deconstruct each and every episode with supple background information.

Not surprisingly, however, it is Johnstone's method of selecting evidence that discredits her efforts to reveal the truth. Despite the undisputed merits of challenging the dominant discourse, Johnstone only uses sources, including Western ones, that fit her argument, presenting them as reality, while everything else is propaganda. And although Johnstone admits to the selectivity, reasoning that it is needed to balance the prevalent anti-Serb bias of Western media reports, she squanders the chance for presenting provocative and stimulating arguments with the resultant anti-Western and pro-Serb bias. The *j'accuse* tone Johnstone uses to reinterpret the previous decade in the former Yugoslavia results in the book reading like a well-researched ramble. Johnstone's fight against the twisting of reality by the Western media becomes the same twisting, only in the opposite direction. Thus, her criticism of the 'limitless demonization of Milošević' (p. 42) turns into demonization of the West to the same degree.

With a paranoid, conspiratorial outlook presented in a pervasively conflictual tone, Johnstone easily identifies the culprits for all the evils that befell former Yugoslavia: the international community; the EU (and Germany in particular since its policies in the 1990s, it is alleged, were a continuation of imperial and Nazi Germany's); the media; politicians and their powerful aides; international and nongovernmental organizations (particularly those sponsored by Germany); diaspora lobbies and émigré circles (Israeli, Albanian, Croatian, Herzegovinan, Bosnian Muslim); public relations companies; ICTY; the Vatican; and even the Habsburgs (the probable future rulers of Croatia). They jointly comprise the 'Western imperial condominium' (p. 122) that served the global hegemonic interests of the United States. In the world, where battle lines are clearly drawn between the domineering West with its Yugoslav proteges, Croats (Tudjman) and Bosnian Muslims (Izetbegovic), and the victimized Serbs, there is no need to provide convincing arguments.

The issue of international intervention remains a highly controversial one. Johnstone's book could have contributed a constructive voice from one of its opponents were its focus

not lost in the mire of biased accusations and reinterpretations. It is, indeed, difficult to present a cohesive argument, not to mention to demonstrate the existence of a vast hegemonic conspiracy, in the form of a rant. Johnstone's professed balancing act became a retaliatory barrage from the other side of the perceived barricade. There is every reason to be frustrated about the international community's (in)actions in the former Yugoslavia and the related media reporting. There is also ample, and seemingly increasing, evidence available for those who allege the U.S. hegemony. But Johnstone offers the same kind of rhetoric that fanned the flames of Yugoslav wars and that provided support to Milošević's propaganda machine. The main benefit of her work thus remains its numerous, if only journalistic, snippets of alternative information that does not often find its way into literature.

Even with Johnstone's fiery contribution to the discourse on Southeastern Europe, the passions of the previous decade seem to have receded. As the former trouble spots of the Yugoslav space gradually converge to the Western democratic standards, and as the waves of democratization supposedly move further east, new issues arise on the academic agenda, and the need to explain former Yugoslavia subsides. But while the inevitable historicization of academic debate seems to be leaving scholars with plenty left to say and little to explain, the nostalgia that becomes stronger with the passage of time will, hopefully, not prevent the debate from fading.