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Observations on the Intellectual History of Ethnology and other Social Sciences in Yugoslavia

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As anthropologists turn increasingly to the study of complex societies, they are led to reflect on the role that social science plays in national ideologies and the ways in which the current state and development of social science reflect other cultural states and processes. Indeed, such reflections can usefully be turned on our own society. One sees that it is much more appropriate to discard old notions of the distinction between 'science' and 'folklore' and to regard the social science of a particular society, however sophisticated and presumably objective, as an important part of its subjective ideology about itself and the world and thus a part of its own folk theory about the relations of man to society and of men to men. This paper is a sketch of some of the interrelationships between Yugoslav social science and other aspects of Yugoslav culture, with primary emphasis on ethnology.*

The social sciences in Yugoslavia exhibit many of the characteristics of other 'parts' of Yugoslav culture. They are a mixture of elements from East and West, and the balance at any one time reflects the stance of Yugoslavia on the cultural bridge between Europe and Asia. The mixture makes it essential to view their nature in historical terms; further, one must enter the usual caveat that it is difficult to make any generalizations whatever about a nation-state that was the intersection of several empires, even when temporal differences are taken into account.

To interpret the development of anthropologically oriented studies in Yugoslavia (and in Eastern Europe as a whole) it is essential to understand clearly how the political experience of those cultures has differed from the American or British. Part of the difference can be grasped by examining the political significance of two key terms, 'folk' (or people) and 'peasant'.

* The present paper is an amalgamation of separate ones presented by the authors at a symposium on East European anthropology, chaired by Bela C. Maday, at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, D.C., December 1, 1967. The two papers were as follows: Halpern, 'Viewpoints of the Peasantry: Ethnology in Yugoslavia', Hammel, 'Some Observations on the Intellectual History of the Social Sciences in Yugoslavia'. Hammel is indebted to Bette S. Denitch for comments on a draft of his original paper.

The development of the modern science of man in France, Britain and America essentially began in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with the Industrial Revolution, the growth of cities, the national revolution in America and the social-political revolution in France, each in its own way growing out of a period of a philosophy of reason concurrent with a time of European conquest over non-European peoples. These events occurred at the same time as the beginnings of the elimination of distinctive rural sub-cultures in the West and the transformation of western civilizations into a future society neither urban nor rural in the pre-industrial sense. In the South Slav lands after the Turkish, Austrian and Hungarian conquests, foreign leaders and elites replaced or incorporated all indigenous institutions above the district level. There the nation-state sought its ultimate rationalization not so much in literate urban traditions, since the urban elite were foreigners, but in native (folk) institutions and traditions which had survived invasion and foreign political dominance. In the English-speaking world, it was the folk and peasant who were foreigners, since rural-urban sub-cultural variations on native soil, as distinct from class differences, had begun to decline markedly by the eighteenth century. This was particularly true in those parts of the British Isles least affected by the impact of industrialization, such as Ireland. But in the Slavic-speaking lands in general and Yugoslavia in particular these terms continued to refer to the embodiment of the nation. The study of man has for Yugoslav scholars meant the study of their own way of life, an intellectual justification for their independent political existence rather than a world-view correlated with that imperial sense of destiny, implicit or explicit, which has characterized Western European and American anthropology.¹ Ethnology and associated disciplines are by their origins and nature profoundly political in all nations, but the kind of political background involved in the growth of British social anthropology or American ethnology and that associated with Yugoslav ethnology are very different, and the resulting disciplines—an ethnology related to colonization and one associated primarily with a developing nation-state—each strongly reflect their different histories.

The Western anthropologist, as a result of his nation's colonial and imperial experiences, has been concerned with discovering the relationships between Western European man and the peoples of Asia, Africa and the New World, in evolutionary and comparative contexts, and often in legitimation of his stewardship and pre-eminence. The ethnologists of the later industrializing areas of Eastern Europe have been concerned with self-discovery and with the legitimation of their native elites. Of course, America has had its populist tradition and rural people, but, even noting such exceptions as the southern Negro and Kentucky mountaineer, there

¹ For a discussion of this matter see Halpern, 1967.

has not been a distinct village-based sub-culture differentiated from that of urban areas. Interest in foreign lands has not been lacking in Eastern Europe, either, but it has played a decisively secondary role in Yugoslav ethnology.

Using the phrase 'social science' in its most general sense as the current philosophy which attempts to explain man's relation to society and to men, the social sciences in Yugoslavia up to the end of the eighteenth century were based in theological dogma both as an explanatory framework and as a social differentiator. Most of the explanations of human behavior rested on identification of religious affiliation, most of the moral norms depended on membership in a religious congregation, and most of the sources of legitimacy for these norms were in religion. This was particularly true in the areas controlled by the Turks and resulted directly from the nature of their system of indirect rule.

The rise of nationalism in much of Europe as an explanatory framework and as a basis for social differentiation seems to have occurred as a consequence of the growth of centralized political control in Germanic areas and of the desire of local and national elites to symbolize their own unity and their differences from other elites at some level of contrast.¹ The mystical concept of 'Das Volk', and particularly the idea of linguistic identification, were elaborated by Herder about 1800, espoused by Goethe, and transmitted to Slavs in Vienna such as Jernej Kopitar and Vuk Karadžić. The same developments were apparent in areas such as Bohemia and Hungary and were instrumental in the revolutions of 1848. It is particularly interesting to note that the most active and successful student of South Slavic linguistics and oral literature, Karadžić, was trained in a Hapsburg setting and directed his work toward cultures under Turkish control. However, that work was devoted not only to raising the banner of linguistic nationalism against Turkish oppression; Karadžić was also instrumental in cleansing the Serbian language of Germanic and Russo-Slavonic characteristics on the Austrian side of the Sava River.

Yugoslav ethnography, as a scientific discipline, comes straight out of the folkloristic Karadžić tradition and with a few exceptions has not altered its approach since the 1920s. In this, it is similar to traditional ethnography in most of Europe, with emphasis on the production of encyclopedic ethnographies of communities and regions, although with more attention given to the reconstruction of internal migrations than is true in some other European countries. The latter emphasis stems from the recency and social immediacy of the great population movements following on the gradual Turkish retreat, but it was also stimulated by the political importance of ethnographic data when the Kingdom of the Serbs,

¹ See Hammel, 1964, for theoretical arguments on this topic.

Croats, and Slovenes was formed after the breakup of the Hapsburg and Ottoman empires.

Ethnologists were closely involved in the formal creation of Yugoslavia at the Paris Peace Conference. It is certainly not a matter of chance that *The Balkan Peninsula*, one of the best known works dealing with the ethnography of this area, was published first in French (1918) and that a Serbo-Croatian edition appeared only after several years. The author, the ethno-geographer Cvijić, was one of six senior experts in the 'Ethnographic Section', the function of which was to advise the Yugoslav delegation on the ethnic distribution of populations with respect to the drawing of frontiers for the new state. There was a flood of publications in French and English as well as Serbo-Croatian dealing with the ethnic distribution of the Yugoslav peoples with regard to frontiers being established in Slovenia with the new Austria, in Dalmatia with Italy, in the Banat with Roumania, and in Macedonia with Bulgaria. Cvijić wrote on the Banat (1919), and another prominent scholar, Tihomir Georgevitch, also a member of the Ethnographic Section, wrote on Macedonia (Georgevitch, 1918). 'The boundaries drawn by the experts [at the Peace Conference] effected for the most part a reasonable compromise between factors of nationality, economics, strategic security, and historical precedent (Lederer, 1963: 182)', but the overall role of the ethnologists was much more than a technical one in 'applied anthropology'. Their political involvement was deep; for example, a strongly nationalistic (specifically Serb rather than Yugoslav) point of view is abundantly evident in Georgevitch's work on Macedonia. In discussing Serbian popular tradition he states:

It is a mine of information on the subject of Serbian national customs, culture, and national self-revelation; it is also full of references to historic events in Serbia's past, her historic spots and personages. If any one were to conceive the idea of delimiting the frontiers of the Serbian nation on the basis of the area over which Serbian popular and national tradition extends, he would be well on the side of truth. Serbian national ballads from the Serbian lands outside Macedonia always refer to the latter as a Serbian land (1918: 211).

To a present-day audience such statements of fifty years ago may carry an unacceptable whiff of bias and loss of objectivity. But with the American Negroes' and French Canadians' vigorous assertions of their identities, unresolved ethnic problems no longer strike Americans as remote.

In discussing the origins of nationalistic movements among the South Slavs above, brief allusion was made to the role of the early nineteenth-century linguist, ethnologist and folklorist Vuk Karadžić. The tradition of study of heroic epic poetry, by Karadžić, Georgevitch and others, has been important in forming the background of Yugoslav ethnology. The human geographical school founded by Cvijić, which has dealt with the origin and migrations of populations within Yugoslavia, has been another

significant influence. Important also has been the relationship of traditional legal institutions to modern law codes and of village-level social structures to emerging national governmental forms. The work of the lawyer Valtazar Bogišić is important in this connection. In 1867 he prepared a guide for the investigation of existing legal customs, and the material gathered was published in 1874. His work was particularly useful in shedding light on the functioning of the South Slav extended family system, the *zadruga*, its authority structure and property concepts. Bogišić further utilized his research in drafting the official legal code for the Kingdom of Montenegro.

This self-conscious interest in folk institutions such as the *zadruga* played a significant role in the intellectual life of the nineteenth century, especially in independent Serbia. A leading Serb socialist proposed a future South Slav state built on the peasant *zadruga* and the related institution of traditional local government, the *opština*. McClellan points out in a recent biographical study:

Marković idealized the *zadruga* and the communal concept to an unreasonable degree. He was convinced that the *zadruga* was disintegrating as a system because of bureaucratic abuses and the machinations of the usurers; he tended to minimize as a contributory factor the desire of the members of the *zadruga* to seek a freer life than any commune, patriarchal or not, could provide. Marković insisted that the *zadruga* and the Russian *obshchina* embodied the purest form of collectivism and would, if revived and perfected (he was vague as to how this was to be accomplished), elevate society from egoism to altruism, from exploitation to justice. Justice was absolute, and Marković equated it with collectivism (1964: 251).

As a result of the work of Karadžić and its elaborations by Bogišić, Cvijić and others, ethnicity became the basic dimension of social science explanation. A good deal of the result of all these efforts, apart from the magnificently detailed historical and distributional data, is a blend of older ideas about religious affiliation and theories about personality differences between ethnic groups. The ethnic and religious framework defined varieties of national character which were invoked to explain behavior. These theories about 'folk mentality', as the Yugoslavs call it, are now a firm part of folk social science, encapsulated in a series of ethnic stereotypes. Interestingly enough, they are fairly accurate; whether because they originally summarized behavior in an adequate way or because people live up to role models, or both, is hard to say. The theories sometimes find questionable re-expression in modern works, such as in Tomasić's on personality and culture in Eastern European politics (1948).

The questions treated by Yugoslav ethnographers are frequently of little interest to modern cultural anthropology as we conceive it in the United States and Britain, for the needs of our own society have turned us more toward studies of institutional and personal integration, rather than of historical legitimacy. Nevertheless, it is easy to see that the quality of

Yugoslav ethnographic descriptions, within their own scope, is excellent. Despite this technical excellence, which is deserving of praise from fellow technicians with a different theoretical viewpoint, the marked changes in Yugoslav society over the past quarter-century have left traditional ethnography behind. The cart has run before the faithful horse; ethnography and ethnology have become conservative and traditionalistic and are held in low repute by other social scientists. The ethnographers' concentration on ethnic subtypes has in part served only to exacerbate the problem of minority differences, particularly since Serbian ethnographers tend to work only in Serbia, Croats only in Croatia, and so on. The findings of ethnography thus run counter to wholesale efforts toward national unification. Ethnography is accused of ignoring the teachings of Marx and Engels or at most of taking a naive and simplistic view of their theories, and of ignoring the basic social questions which confront modern Yugoslav society.¹ Beginning students in ethnography are now few, and there is strong interest in creating new departments of social anthropology.

This interpretation, it is clear, is that ethnography as a social science developed as a response to colonial pressure and followed the retreating lines of crumbling empires as a major ideological contribution to the unification of South Slavs against non-Slavs, but that it was limited to those social goals whatever its scientific objectives may have been. There was no impetus from a Colonial Office or a Bureau of Indian Affairs to broaden the horizon and set other social goals. If modern developments have had any effect on Yugoslav ethnology, it has been to strengthen the evolutionistic bias of any broader interpretations by providing a new source of legitimacy in Morgan via Engels. There are, of course, significant exceptions, some dating back to the 1940s, in which a few ethnographers show a sensitivity to newer ideas such as *Kulturkreislehre* or some aspects of comparative social anthropology, but they are rare. (The works of Filipović, Gluščević, Pantelić, and Pešić are examples.)

Most of what has been said pertains to Serbia from about 1800 to 1918 and even to 1942. In the north, the Croats also developed an ethnological tradition, but it grew in the stonier soil of Hapsburg control. Linguistic identification was an important arguing point in the Illyrian movement and figured in the maneuverings for a trialistic state. However, Croatian interest in the peasant did not really develop until after 1918. That interest, further, concentrated not only on national identity but also on the problems of a peasantry impoverished by the backlash of increasing industrialization. Croatian social science then contributed to the idea of Yugoslavia as a nation, but it also symbolized the separateness of the Croats, and it turned into rural sociology under the pressures of national concern. Between the two world wars it was the Croatian Peasant Party that

¹ See particularly Kulišić, 1967.

symbolized the striving for national identity which the Serbs had at least partially resolved during their period of independent existence. It is impossible to consider research into the social and economic problems of rural life in Croatia in that period without taking its role into account. Many Croatian scholars engaged in ethnological or rural sociological studies were for the most part members or sympathizers of the party. Even studies of folklore were related to the general effort clarifying and recording the national tradition; as with Bogišić and Marković in the previous century, there was an instrumental concern with turning their own tradition to the solution of modern problems. (Cf. also the School of Village Studies in Romania under Gusti, which had similar objectives [Mitrany, 1961].)

It is more difficult to trace the development of other social sciences, but these, too, seem to reflect intense social concerns. The pauperization of the peasantry through the nineteenth century and particularly after World War II led to an interest in agricultural economics and economic history as well as in rural sociology; perhaps the most outstanding modern students in this area are Bićanić and, among emigrants, Tomašević. The collapse of Yugoslav markets after trade with Austria was diminished after World War I, coupled with efforts at industrialization, led to studies of the industrial system and of industrial economics, as in the work of Kukoleča. However, up until the revolution, sociology, as distinct from social history, seems to have been poorly developed except as a philosophical doctrine among the Marxists.¹

After the revolution, and particularly following the liberalization that gradually developed after the Cominform break, social science became fashionable because of the Marxist emphasis on 'scientific' explanation of social phenomena, and it continues to be a much more important instrument of policy than in any Western country. Although Yugoslavia had many economic problems in the first five years after World War II, the ones which seemed most immediate were those of the mobilization of human resources. That is a political problem, not an economic one, and social science (except for ethnography) concentrated on the validity of dogmatic Marxist interpretations of history, on the lessons of Soviet development, and on the error of bourgeois sociological interpretations, all of these features symbolizing the unity of the Communist bloc and its opposition to the capitalist world.

The developments in general social science from about 1950 to 1955 parallel those in other areas of culture, such as literature and the kind of popular music played on the radio. The heavy Soviet emphasis was gone, the dispute with Western ideas muted, and the economic and diplomatic

¹ For the periodization of sociological development which follows Hammel is particularly indebted to Lukić, 1959.

position of Yugoslavia became similarly equivocal. The shift in ideological orientation was not a matter of toadying to great powers but a consequence of pragmatic eclecticism in seeking solutions to pressing problems and the relaxation of cultural boundaries which made it easier for Yugoslav scholars to come into contact with other ideas, particularly through training abroad. At the same time, the problem of inspiring *people*, not just *populations*, to further agonizing efforts of primary accumulation and adaptation led to a growing interest in Freudian psychology, psychiatry, and social psychology, and was symbolized by the adoption of more humanistic political values presented in the writings of the early Marx.

By the last half of the 1950s the exhortative stage of the revolution was largely over. Running a complex bureaucracy requires data, and the social sciences began to gather it, just as ethnology had for the Peace Conference. While ethnography stayed with the older and now outmoded orientation of empirical effort, the effort in sociology shifted away from a unique concentration on theory toward intensive collection of new kinds of data. As direct, centralized control of the political and economic system waned, economic reporting and public opinion soundings came into play as important devices in gauging the response of the population to social processes. The sociological literature of this period begins to record names like Lazarsfeld in important methodological footnotes, with Engels relegated to ritual prefaces.

Most recently, there appears to have been a growing concern with new theories, as opposed to new methodologies. Like Western social scientists, the Yugoslavs have had their data-collecting spree (and it continues), and like at least some eager data collectors in the West, they are puzzled about the utility of the data in creating a coherent picture of a functioning and changing society. Yugoslav eclecticism is demonstrated again in the combination of Marx with Merton, of Lenin with Lazarsfeld, and the elevation of Weber and Durkheim to a position they enjoy in no other Eastern European state. The economic theories of Horvat are an outstanding example of such synthesis.¹ If there is a real theoretical dispute in Yugoslavia now, it is not so much between scientific and bourgeois sociology (to use their terms) as between theoretical and methodological preoccupation, illustrating the shift from a system of centralized control in which all major goals are clear and one needs only hard data to implement them, to one in which political and economic liberalization have given social science yet another shove. The unifying pattern which bridges this difference, however, is curious. While the Yugoslavs are eclectic and pragmatic in their application of social science to social problems, they are eclectic but *not* pragmatic in their social science. The exercise of social science, like the exercise of any other craft in Yugoslavia, such as plumbing or carpentry,

¹ See Ward, 1967.

is highly professionalized and ritualized. The introduction or preface to most Yugoslav works of social science, however empirical, is an extended legitimation of even the simplest conclusions to follow, with numerous grandfather citations. Grand theoreticians will artfully combine early Marx with Durkheim, survey researchers will spend pages in the manipulation of statistical formulae. Perhaps the most influential intellectuals in Yugoslavia are philosophers of social science, not practitioners of social science, although the latter have often had a marked effect on policy. The research institutes which were created to bypass the traditional university structure often contain departments of philosophy, and social philosophers have a major influence. This, too, reflects a general cultural state. Despite its apparent successes, Yugoslav society is uncertain of itself, and the social scientists who are so likely to be taken seriously in policy affairs (unlike their Western brethren) have an unaccustomed burden of responsibility. It is small wonder that they seek comfort in some kind of theoretical justification when the stakes are so high and the odds uncertain.¹

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¹ There may be a new confidence building; recent information indicates that at least one major social science research institute has dropped its department of philosophy.

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