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Introduction of "War Among the Yugoslavs" (Special Issue)

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*Special Issue
War Among the Yugoslavs*



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THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF EAST EUROPE REVIEW

SPECIAL ISSUE:
WAR AMONG THE YUGOSLAVS

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INTRODUCTION

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War in Yugoslavia and Its Parallels

This issue presents American and West European anthropological perspectives on recent events prior to the outbreak of war in former Yugoslavia. Included are articles by anthropologists from Croatia and Serbia which deal directly with the war and its impact on their respective societies. The first group of essays should be understood as background to armed struggle involving violent death, destruction, and bereavement and to those tragedies still in the making. The horrors associated with events in this Balkan setting are unparalleled in Europe since World War Two. They do not have precise parallels elsewhere but bring to mind the sufferings of former communist states. As in late-1970s Cambodia and, today in the Caucasus and Central Asia, issues of conflicting national identities have been paramount. Religious and national conflicts also have parallels in non-communist areas. Events in Cyprus and Lebanon, in Liberia, Angola, Somalia and the Southern Sudan, as well as in Sri Lanka and Kashmir, are some examples.

In sum, the conflicts in ex-Yugoslavia are part of a late 20th century world-wide trend. These instances, although far from similar, involve military conflicts over control of territories inhabited by conflicting national groups. Such conflicts inflict severe privation on civilian populations assumed to be part of the arena of conflict. In some cases creation of a nation state is the proximate cause; in others, as in ex-Yugoslavia, conflicts occur within and between recognized national entities. This series of essays, while having important analogues to events elsewhere, is not primarily intended to be comparative but focuses on the Balkan case.

Rationality and Controlling Violence - A Possible Relationship?

As the multiple consequences of this conflict make apparent, there is a drastic need to understand both the origins and manner of the violence. Our hope here, perhaps not totally in vain, is that some relationship exists between understanding and conflict resolution. It is from this perhaps naive perspective that I begin. After visiting parts of ex-Yugoslavia this year (1993) it seems absolutely essential to try in some rational way to come to terms with tales of beheading, crucifixions, impaling, "drawing and quartering of men," evisceration of women, rape, castration, punitive circumcision, and the carving of crosses on

flesh. Some of these are well-documented occurrences; others await investigation.

Associated with this mayhem is the widespread destruction of cultural property involving the dynamiting of mosques and churches and the obliteration of historic monuments. There has also been tremendous destruction of infrastructure--hospitals, housing stock, schools, water systems and bridges. The development of a forensic social-cultural anthropology can aid in the analysis of the atrocities. For example, there appear to be national styles of inflicting death and mutilating corpses which seem to have historic precedents from both world wars and are found in sources such as Balkan epic poetry. Distinctions need, of course, to be made between civilian and military casualties.

There is also a need for an ethno-archaeology of architectural destruction. Significant here are differences of structures destroyed by shelling or buildings deliberately blown up from within. Other distinctions include looting before destruction or incineration with contents in place. These acts of hatred all required deliberate planning and time to implement, and manifest strongly held cultural values.

Historic Roots of Ethnocentrism in Multinational Politics

Such biases have deep roots. In the old entrance hall to a villa for visiting academics in the city of Graz there is a slogan emblazoned in German Gothic script: "German House, German Land, Protect It God With a Strong Hand." While these sentiments were turn-of-the-century pro-German Austrian nationalist, they also somewhat echo the ethnocentrism of some Serb, Croat, and Moslem forces. Apparently now gone are the accommodations which made possible the functioning of the multinational Austro-Hungarian empire. The end of World War One saw the demise of land-based, multinational empires of the czars, Ottomans, and Habsburgs. Yugoslavia was born to the Wilsonian illusion of states based on national identities. As it combined Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Turkish state traditions, historical contradiction was built in from its beginning. This state was fragmented during World War Two under German and Axis occupation but was reconstituted with communist victory. It definitively collapsed with the demise of European communism. Still, as the Czech and Slovak cases illustrate, ethnic fragmentation can be non-violent.

Refugees as "Dirt" and "Livestock"

Political fragmentation has severe human consequences. War refugees have become throw away, non-persons. Like Mary Douglas views dirt symbolically as "matter out of place," Bosnians refugees are people who have become less human in the eyes of those who now support them and among whom they now exist. Not quite inanimate dirt perhaps, but as one refugee in Austria expressed it, "We are something like livestock which are maintained."

Bosnian Moslem beggars on the streets of medieval Graz represent more than the destruction and pauperization of a people. They represent a crucial failure for the West. The full consequences of this are not yet fully imagined. Reference here is not to moral law or religious values nor to conflicts with the Islamic world. Rather it is to the increasing interdependence of civilizations as we approach the 21st century. If the breakdown of civilized behavior is permitted without effective opposition, then we are all threatened.

Civil Violence As A Basis of New State Structures

Such comments cannot be made by an American as if we live in a society without large-scale violence. One need only mention the Los Angeles riots. But these riots represent individual, societal and state deficiencies. They lack organization and do not question the legitimacy of the state. They indicate that multicultural U.S. continues to suffer violence on the part of people who feel excluded from the system. Characteristically, redistribution by looting was the major act of out-of-control crowds and, like similar riots in the U.S., stayed mainly in the ghetto. But in ex-Yugoslavia violence is sponsored by organized groups in the context of one small state's collapse and the emergence of successor mini states. Pre-1991 Yugoslavia had a modest standard of living by American or Western European standards. Though some were poor there was (excepting Gypsies) no large racial or ethnic underclass as in the U.S. The outbreak of conflict in Yugoslavia was unrelated to poverty, a sense of relative deprivation, or feelings of social exclusion. It was not the work of an urban proletariat.

Most of these essays speak of societies at peace with a degree of relative prosperity. Many person, now refugees, felt they had a future. How then did existing ethnic distinctions and muted conflicts suddenly grow into the war on Croatian territory and the subsequent progressive destruction of Bosnian society? It is not historically valid to assign to the Serbian people as a whole exclusive responsibility for the current situation. The outcome has been part of a spiral of hate and destruction involving all groups. These essays explore such matters from a variety of national perspectives and challenge the reader by their diversity.

It is vital to keep in mind that the violence was initiated by Serbs in Croatia from those areas where their population was concentrated (e.g. Krajina). However, they feel their action justified by historical fears deriving partly from their experience in World War Two under the Croatian fascist state. As essays by Denich, Hammel, Hayden and Simic point out, the disintegration of Yugoslavia brought these Serbian fears to the fore as a new Croatia emerged, replacing the secular republic of socialist Yugoslavia.

Crimes and the Anthropology of War

No matter where ultimate responsibility lies, the destructive consequences of the war are abundantly visible in both Croatia and Bosnia. In Slavonia traveling through villages and towns of a former battlefield zone I gained some idea of the destruction apart from that on TV or in the press. I did not seek nor see any evidence to document the purported crimes referred to earlier. But even without this evidence, now being developed by private, UN, and member government commissions, there is a reality to these tales not only for those who are refugees but also for those who live in or near destroyed areas. In such places there are visual reminders which keep alive these recent histories within traumatized communities. In refugee communities enforced idleness encourages a concentration of memory.

The specifics of the different circumstances of these events provides the possibility of verification in ways familiar to both criminal investigation and anthropological field research. Already "anthropology of war" studies on ex-Yugoslavia have begun to appear, as the recent publication of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore in Zagreb to which Povrzanović in this issue refers. These concerns will also be the focus of a conference planned for late 1993 by the Institute of Ethnic Studies and the Slovene Anthropological Society in Ljubljana.

Serbian self-perception and aggression

In mentioning war crimes against persons and property my intention is not to demonize the Serbs as in the popular press. Still, I feel that Serbian military forces, both regulars and irregulars, operating in Croatia and in Bosnia, as well as the remaining "Yugoslav Army" of present truncated Yugoslavia, do share a primary, although not exclusive, responsibility for the current conflict. These complex distinctions are pointed out in U.S. and U.N. reports as well as those of non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International and Helsinki Watch.

Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia have also suffered grievously from the war and many (including some Moslems) are now refugees in Serbia. There is, however, another view of Serbian aggression which focuses on motivations and which has been discussed in

the press. This concerns their view of themselves as victim even as they initiate aggression. For example, in *Time Magazine* of April 12, 1993 an essay entitled "A Moral Mystery: Serbian Self-Pity" articulated this view:

I had wondered for months how in the face of the world's almost unanimous condemnation and disgust (excepting Orthodox countries like Greece and Russia, jmh) the Serbs could keep up a war conducted by rape, murder and the starvation of whole cities. How do the Serbs keep on? How do they explain themselves?In their own minds they have solved their formidable moral problem by declaring themselves the injured party....The Belgrade television stations endlessly show atrocity scenes, dramas displaying Serbs as victims, with grinning Muslim devils holding the severed heads of Serbs. The truly accomplished ethnic self-pitier projects all around him as a siege of malevolent conspiracy.

Such views emphasize the deep historical roots stretching back to the defeat of Serbian imperial forces by the Ottoman Turks at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. The anniversary of this defeat was a Serbian national holiday in pre-World War Two Yugoslavia. The complex of attitudes associated with Serbian martyrdom and glorified in their epic poetry makes it easier for foreign journalists to see the Serbs as the core of evil.

Reciprocal Demonization

Not surprisingly the parties to the conflict reciprocally demonize each other. Thus many Croats and Serbs see each other in World War Two time frames. The Serbs picture Croats as fascist Ustashi while Croats depict Serbs as Chetniks (i.e. Serb royalists in World War Two), supporters of a prewar regime that suppressed their rightful identity. Since the Serbs view Moslems as fundamentalist radicals, they consider themselves defenders of Western Civilization from a Moslem onslaught. Moslems see themselves as victims of Christian persecution, reversing the image of "the terrible Turk" persecuting Balkan Christians.

The time warp is further emphasized by both Serb and Croat forces which have adopted uniforms and insignia used in World War Two. Worn as badges of pride of identity by one side, they symbolize death and destruction for the other. Their respective media reinforce these views. These factors are cited by several of the authors in their contributions. Anthropological concepts of liminality are clearly applicable here.

A Visit to Lipik in Croatia and the Ethnography of Destruction

A visit to the former spa of Lipik enabled me to put a personal perspective on Maja Povrzanović's text. This town is located on the Croatian-Serbian truce line in Slavonia, to the east of Zagreb, near the town of Kutina and the now almost-deserted highway that connected Zagreb and Belgrade. The conditional nature of Croatia's sovereignty is emphasized by the omnipresence of UN forces. To reach Lipik it was necessary to pass through two UN checkpoints. The town formerly had a mixed Serb-Croat population. Some of the former Serbian inhabitants are named as war refugees in documents published in Belgrade. We were told that the local Serbs had fled with the retreating Serb forces.

One woman told of her parents, then in their eighties, who stayed behind when the town was evacuated by Croatian forces during the 1991 fighting. She described how upon her return she found them with their throats slit. They had lived next door and she showed us their kitchen where their aprons still hung neatly on hooks. In a way, she expected them to emerge from their kitchen as they always had.

While there were destroyed houses all around, there was also evidence of rebuilding (with private German aid). A private cafe had opened next to the demolished department store; the firm had the ironic name of *Budućnost* (Future). The spa was the principle industry of the town. It had existed since the end of the 19th century and was recently remodeled. A large glassed-in area had contained a swimming pool and special mineral baths.

The destruction here was total with shattered glass constantly underfoot. The demolition seemed purposeful and obviously had taken time to complete. We were shown graffiti in a nearby cellar. It was in Serbian Cyrillic script with comments about damning and killing Croats. This kind of evidence clearly needs careful evaluation and, of course, can be falsified. Still, the enormity of the totally shattered spa spread over several acres was very real, as were the burned out interiors of homes.

Impact of the War on Serbia

In Serbia the impact of the war has been severe but indirect. A significant part of my studies in Yugoslavia was concerned with the Serbian village of Orašac, south of Belgrade near the town of Topola, the home of the Serbian (Karadjordjevic) dynasty. While recently in Austria, I met with workers from Orašac who now live permanently in western Europe. Like many other communities in Serbia, Orašac now has refugees from Bosnia. Hotels in the nearby tourist town of Arandjelovac are also full of refugees, many from Bosnia.

One of these workers recounted how a young Orašac neighbor, who had fought in Bosnia and at Vukovar (the ethnically mixed Croatian Slavonian town destroyed by the "Yugoslav" army), had "gone partly mad." He ran around the village half naked in the middle of winter "shouting aimlessly." In his more rational moments he described how, on burial assignment, he saw the sexually mutilated corpses of Serbian soldiers. One of my informants described Serbia as anarchic. He recounted how at a hotel he had an encounter with a Bosnian Serb who threatened him. He noticed the registration of the man's car. It still had the Croatian owner's name prominently displayed.

These villagers sought to differentiate themselves as Šumadijans from the "heart of Serbia" as opposed to Bosnian Serbs and those from Krajina. They felt they had a different outlooks and values from those outside Serbia proper. A key distinction is that Šumadijan Serbs have always lived in an ethnically homogeneous area, a situation the Serbs in Krajina and Bosnia have been trying to create. One impact is clear: the near destruction of the economy now suffering sanction-related hyper-inflation. As of September 1993 the central bank issued its first billion dinar note with a value of approximately \$3.50. The rate of inflation is reckoned to increase hourly.

Demonstrations in Serbia and Conflict in Croatia

Mirjana Prošić-Dvornić's essay in this volume discusses students and activist women's groups in Belgrade who have organized anti-war demonstrations. These vigorous and innovative events have so far had minimal effects on government policy. They have, however, made military recruitment more difficult and certainly added to the government's growing problems. In her contribution Prošić-Dvornić documents concerted efforts by an important part of Serbian society to differentiate themselves from the spurious folk ethos espoused by Milošević and his supporters. Their lack of political power reflects that urban intellectuals and their supporters have not succeeded in enlisting other groups. But her details of the protests presents a facet of contemporary Serbian society which has received almost no attention in the foreign press.

In a view from Zagreb, Povrzanoeć discusses the impact of the war on Croatia. A conflict which, at the time of the writing, had left some 3,000 dead, 8,000 missing, and 700,000 homeless. There also has been widespread impact of destruction and violence on all Croatians although some have obviously been more directly affected than others. While Croatian ethnologists are engaged in case studies of the impact of the war on their territory, it is surely notable that Povrzanoeć also states the need "for an ethnography of this war written from the other side," and she also notes the existence of a peace movement in Serbia. One may hope that at some point conditions will permit

these scholars to exchange ideas.

None of the essays written by those from outside ex-Yugoslavia deal with the specifics of conflict but rather with a society on the eve of war. This is a consequence of the almost two years that have elapsed since this special issue was conceived. There is now the possibility that war may be reignited in Croatia. The truce lines are not recognized as stable or desirable boundaries. Pressures for readjustment of boundaries come especially from those displaced from their homes. There is concern that fighting may engulf other areas such as Kosovo and Macedonia, with large Albanian minorities, and Vojvodina with its Hungarian and other non-Serb populations. It is thus appropriate to see these accounts as a prelude to war, as not only anticipating tragedy but also as the end of an era.

One of the notable features of the Yugoslav conflict is the unity of objectives of the warring parties. That is, they have all focused on the destruction of the cultural heritage of their enemies while cataloging and mourning their own losses. Particularly lacking has been a sense of a common heritage worth preserving. This purposeful destruction of past historical identities is paralleled by the partial obliteration of the infrastructure painstakingly built up since World War Two, the development of which was a crowning achievement of socialist Yugoslavia and a prime rationale for its existence. Such actions not only obliterate a part of the past, they preempt the future and thus doubly impoverish the present. It now seems possible that if fighting continues the destruction may equal, or even exceed, that of the Second World War in Bosnia and parts of Croatia.

The Reality of the Conflict and the Objectives of this Issue

In assuming responsibility as guest editor for this issue of *The Anthropology of East Europe Review* I only hope that a part of my and the editor's aspirations can be realized. As discussed, providing some Olympian perspective on this tragedy is not our aim. Rather, we hope to convey some understanding of the factors behind the present state of affairs and, hopefully, to provide some insight into why the conflict may continue. Of course, such abstract statements do not do justice to the terribly unequal realities in the conflict. One cannot equate anarchy, repression, economic decline and the burden of refugees in Serbia with hunger, starvation, rape, torture, killing and the destruction of villages and towns, all in the name of ethnic cleansing in Croatia and Bosnia. In some ways this striving for ethnic homogeneity is an attempt to impose an image of rural uniformity against the real diversity of town and city. The student anti-war protests which Prošić-Dvornić describes do not simply represent a sophisticated Belgrade element opposing Milošević's fascist tinged populism, or the secular city against the populist small-town and countryside.

Enforced ethnic homogeneity, a consequence of ethnic cleansing, represents not only an obvious denial of democracy and of the multiethnic secular nature of contemporary urban life, but also a negation of history. Particularly in the Balkans, widespread migration has been a major part of the historical record. Ethnic homogeneity emphasizes an artificial stability, based on restricting contact and population movement. The predominant image of this phenomenon is death, not only to one's foes but for a multi-cultural social system and an interdependent world.

Migrations and Ethnic Cleansing

In his book *The Balkan Peninsula* the great Serbian scholar Jovan Cvijić suggested that a part of Serbian identity was established through a series of migrations. A scholarly series, *Settlements and the Origins of Population* published by the Serbian Academy of Sciences, followed Cvijić's ideas and was basic to Serbian ethnology for some eighty years. These volumes analyze by region the migration history of Serbia. There is a contradiction to ethnic cleansing inherent in these accounts of migration, particularly true for those studies which deal with Serbian migration outside the boundaries of Serbia. Implicit in this series is the idea that no group can have a monopoly on the right to migrate or claim its historical movement as unique.

The disputed ethnic frontiers within ex-Yugoslavia represent not "age old" immutable boundaries but relatively permeable dividing lines fixed at particular historical periods. It is clearly not the mixture of peoples as such which is the issue but rather the constantly varying values attached to these distributions. Ethnic homogeneity is not only profoundly anti-urban, but it is ahistorical as well and ignores the fact that, until well into the 19th century, cities like Belgrade had largely non-indigenous populations in which Serbs were a minority until well into the 19th century. In Serbia it was the countryside which was homogeneous, though it would insult the peasants of Serbia and their histories to consider ethnic homogeneity a folk concept. Peasants always exist together with urbanites and Serbian peasants were active traders, as were the founders of both 19th century Serbian dynasties. Folk symbolism has been used ad nauseam by the Milošević government to facilitate its power. As observers the conflict have noted, it has not been engendered solely by ethnic hatreds but by the manipulation of historic antagonisms by former communists as a means of consolidating their power.

The U.N. has in effect supported these attitudes. They have failed to recognize the basic right of people to remain in their homes and share a communal life. A multi-cultural society has no place in UN partition plans for Bosnia based on the

legitimization of ethnic cleansing. A partition which creates inviable ministates invites future conflict. There is also a terrifying logic involved in the division of Bosnia. If small ethnic enclaves can be carved out within mini-states, why should Croatia and Serbia be any different from Bosnia? Why not a Serbian enclave within Croatia and Albanian and Hungarian ones within Serbia?

Varying Assumptions and the Social Category "Yugoslav"

All the contributors to this issue try to be analytical though basic perspectives differ. It is not the purpose of this introduction to establish a dominant or correct one but to show some of the ways these perspectives relate as well as to bring together here the range of cultures which characterized ex-Yugoslavia. These essays were originally solicited from anthropologists (and one social historian concerned with peasant society, Despalatovic). Contributors were asked to provide background to the ongoing conflict based on their pre-war fieldwork. These essays are mainly organized regionally by the former republics of Yugoslavia. There are, however, other essays such as the demographic analysis of Botev and Wagner concerned with intermarriage, which appropriately take a Yugoslav focus.

While some essays are concerned with the dynamics of the Serb-Croat conflict as a whole (e.g. Denich and Hammel), others take a particular regional perspective. Thus there is a Serbian viewpoint presented by Simic paralleling Despalatovic on Croatia. The essays are different in style with Simic, more programmatic and Despalatovic focusing on historic specificities and personal observation. Regionally, from Croatia, are the works of Bennett and Olsen reporting on towns in Dalmatia and Slavonia respectively. Though some of the authors have ties to the region by parentage or marriage, they nonetheless are observers from the outside. Most of the authors are American and based in the U.S. The exceptions are Bringa, who is Norwegian, and Minnich and Schwartz who write from Bergen and Copenhagen respectively. The other two authors, Poverzanović and Prošić-Dvornić represent "insider" views and deal with aspects of the impact of the war on Zagreb and Belgrade respectively.

Some of these essays focus on issues of cultural legitimacy. Reineck emphasizes this for the Albanians of Kosovo, who are predominantly Moslem. Compared to Slovenia which is, as Minnich shows, linguistically, geographically and culturally apart from the rest of Yugoslavia, Kosovo Albanians reside in what had been the heartland of the Serbian medieval kingdom, an area containing many revered Serbian Orthodox churches. Therefore, in the breakup of Yugoslavia, Yugoslav army action in Slovenia was sporadic and limited while Kosovo is now ruled

directly from Belgrade with political and cultural autonomy for the majority Albanians out of the question. Reineck describes this situation and its impact on Albanian society while the statistical comparisons of Botev and Wagner show these two areas as economic and social opposites within former Yugoslavia. Compared to Slovenes and Albanians, the Orthodox Macedonians described by Schwartz have a close relationship to the Serbs both culturally and linguistically. But their distinctiveness, also reflected in their national traditions and political activity, was recognized by the communist government which granted Macedonia republic status. Still Macedonia is distinct in that, in addition to the majority Orthodox Macedonians, there are significant minorities of Albanians and of Slavic speaking Moslems. (A portion of these latter people declared themselves "Turks" and migrated to Turkey after World War Two.) Relations between the Macedonian speaking Orthodox and Moslems as presented by Schwartz continue to be stable, though there has always been a defined separateness parallel to that in Bosnia, as described by Bringa. The war thus certainly did not arise from local-level antagonisms. Rather, the origins of the conflict in Bosnia lie in the Serbian desire, as articulated by its political leaders, to remain in a common Serbian state and not a constituent people in a separate multiethnic one. Olsen provides a view from a town in Croatian Slavonia bordering on Bosnia. Here, differences with Moslems were discussed but, as in Bosnia and Macedonia, were not a cause for violence. Since Olsen studied a town her impression seems to have been that ethnic differences were muted in the urban setting. What then produced the bitter struggles?

A View to the Past--Recent and Distant:

It was in Sarajevo, Bosnia, then an annexed Austro-Hungarian province, that the Habsburg heir, Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated. The involvement of Serbian nationalists in this has been described at length. But it is now worth recalling that the museum honoring the main assassin, Gavrilo Princip, was built by the Communist regime near the bridge where the murder occurred in downtown Sarajevo. Ironically, this area has been heavily damaged by Serbian guns. Violence in the assertion of national identity is celebrated by many nations. For most West European and North American countries it is only part of an heroic past, though in ex-Yugoslavia it is part of a present indissolubly linked to a past. For many this past provides a moral but violent guide to a future envisaging the elimination of others. The consequences for the coming century are dramatically different from those which applied in the past. Today's complex and interdependent world is now hostage to such historically focused conflicts which increasingly make the present and future hostage to the past. The world can never really be the same after the Nazi Holocaust. But although ethnic cleansing has similarities to Nazi policies, the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia does not involve vulnerable minorities like Jews and Gypsies, but is between major ethnic groups. Most Western observers see both the Serb-Croat and Bosnian conflicts as internally produced. This is, of course, not the Serbian government viewpoint where the collapse of Yugoslavia is interpreted as the result of outside influences from Germany, the Vatican, and others. But these discussions almost never include a detailed examination of the areas where the war takes place. However, these essays do just that. The perspective they stress is the normative aspect of multiethnic life in ex-Yugoslavia. Thus the industrialization of Yugoslavia in the postwar period was associated with large-scale migrations to cities and brought together the country's diverse national groups in new ways. During this period of "socialist construction" the history of earlier generations was not forgotten but suppressed. This attitude reflected not only official policy but had much public support through the 1950s and 60s when the Yugoslav standard of living was rapidly rising. As the essays emphasize, the present war did not erupt because of uncontained hatreds but due to forces mobilized by former communist elite using nationalism as a rationale. It is no accident that Milosevic the banker and Tudjman the general received their training in the communist state apparatus. In reflecting on the current scene one is overwhelmed by a sense of tragedy not yet played out. Both Hayden in his reflections and Hammel in his "Yugoslav Labyrinth" point out the complexity of this ethnic war. As Hammel states: "...there are no clean hands in this conflict, there are no guys in white hats." Like several other contributors he notes that in all his travels he "never ... encountered hatred of the virulence that is now expressed." These observations make it all the more imperative to understand how the transition to full scale war occurred.

Was the Multiethnic State Ever Accepted?

In the extensive literature on Yugoslavia there was much comment on regional politics and associated development problems, but one looks in vain for commentary about the possibility of a catastrophic war. If, however, I retroactively examine my field experiences I do recall suggestive incidents. For example, in a

1990 visit to Sofia I spoke with a representative of a Bulgarian nationalist party who

inveighed against the Moslems. This was in the context of the recent large-scale departure of Moslems from Bulgaria to Turkey in the last years of the Zhivkov regime. This departure was preceded by a long period of harassment where Moslems were pressed to assume Bulgarian names and identities. A few Moslems were killed, but the numbers were limited and some have since returned from Turkey. This unpleasant situation is still a far cry from Bosnia. I was especially impressed that the complaints of this Bulgarian nationalist lacked the profound antipathy of conversations I heard later that summer in Yugoslavia. There had always been some questioning of the legitimacy of the Yugoslav state, particularly by non-Serbs, in a way that never happened in Bulgaria.

Analogous to the Bulgarian's comments was a remark made in the early 1960s by a Zagreb professor whose work focussed on conflicts in Yugoslav economic planning. He evaluated his trips to Belgrade by noting there were only two good things about that city: Turkish coffee and the fast train to Zagreb. Such attitudes, however, do not easily explain the emergence of a bitter war. From this perspective Denich's perceptive essay on the symbolically unburied dead from World War Two are more instructive. She implies that clues to the conflict do not lie in observable behaviors, but in perceived pasts as manipulated by elites.

A contrasting theme, but one dominant in the 1950s and 1960s, was the desire to build a new society apart from the hatreds of the war. As a Croatian student from Sarajevo commented during research in Bosnia in the 1960s "We are united by our common suffering." This was, of course, the official communist view which looked to the ideal Partisan model. But this ethos did not last. More representative of the 1970s and 80s was an engineer from Belgrade who recalled that as a child he and his family were often insulted vacationing in Dalmatia where their license plates identified them as from Belgrade. In recent years such incidents became increasingly common.

Still, some ties across ethnic boundaries endure and the current war offers many examples of surviving inter-ethnic friendships. For example, a young Moslem woman from Sarajevo, now a student in Austria, recalled how she left Sarajevo at the beginning of the current fighting. Her best friend, a Serb, gave up her identity card so she could exit through the Serbian lines. Arriving in Belgrade she was put up for several days at the home of Serbian friends. In a sad and ironic commentary, many Moslem Bosnian refugees in Austria interviewed in spring 1993 commented on how, until the outbreak of hostilities, they had good relations with Serbs in their communities.

Unresolved Conflicts Leading to War

Denich's essay provides a perspective on the causes of the present conflict. She depicts 1977 as a watershed when trends toward modernization were interrupted. Preceding this was the '71 Croatian "maspok" movement which articulated "Catholicism, the Latin alphabet, and Croatian nationhood." This movement, Denich suggests, revived the "nation-state" concept in opposition to the Yugoslav idea which was supposed to resolve "the lack of congruence between ethnicity and territory." According to Denich this movement was at the expense of the Serbian minority in Croatia who composed about 15% of the population. Tito's purge of the Croatian communist leadership was also paralleled, Denich suggests, by the disciplining of the so-called "liberal" i.e., anti-nationalist Serbian communists.

As noted, the unresolved animosities dating from the killings in World War Two are also a key factor in the genesis of the present conflict. For more than two generations Tito's communist system tried unsuccessfully to suppress these memories. While the Communists touted "brotherhood and unity" of all Yugoslav peoples, their propaganda emphasized the Partisan victory over all internal groups and external enemies to legitimize their state. Consequently, the suffering of the defeated were suppressed and the only dead officially remembered were those on the Partisan side. Their opponents were demonized and caricatured, much as happens among the conflicting groups today.

As wartime memories remained unresolved, meaningful readjustment of interethnic relationships was impossible. In Spring 1986 the Serbian Academy of Sciences held a conference about the World War Two casualties. Vladimir Dedier, Tito's biographer and later a dissident, was a major organizer. In retrospect it seems significant that he was originally from a Serbian family in Sarajevo. Also among the sponsors was the Serbian academician Milos Macura, a demographer and former head of the Population Division of the United Nations, by origin from Knin, in Krajina. Though the conference attracted considerable attention and opening sessions were attended by a large number of senior Yugoslav army officers, no significant publication resulted. Certainly this matter was never pursued on a multinational basis with Croats and others. Both ethnic-national factors and years of Communist "unity" propaganda undermined such an effort. Only Partisan names were on the omnipresent local war monuments as the Communists were obviously unwilling to confront the myths they had created. It is certainly significant that many prominent members of the Serbian Academy have supported the Milošević government. Even in 1990 the significant differences in views between members of the academy and many faculty at the university were already.

The failure of communism to meaningfully resolve ethnic differences is now related to the ways in which pre-socialist and socialist Yugoslavia were put together. A number of the contributions refer to the now apparent reluctance of the various peoples to enter into the Yugoslav state as a result of the Versailles conference ending World War I. They also refer to the failure of Wilson's vision of the emergence of nation states from the remains of the multinational Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. Certainly the opposed viewpoints of the Croats and Serbs about the establishment of Yugoslav statehood have long been evident. The unfulfilled expectations of the former and the feelings of the latter on abandoning their own state have frequently been expressed. Related to this a Serbian view now sees as their loss the autonomy provisions for Kosovo Albanians and for various other minorities, like Hungarians in the Vojvodina. They note that no analogous provision was made for Serbs in Croatia.

Views from Croatian and Serbian Perspectives

Some insight into the conceptual barriers that divide Serbs and Croats can be gained from the divergent perspectives presented by Despalatovic and Simic, both accomplished scholars with long experience in ex-Yugoslavia. Regarding postwar Yugoslavia Despalatovic writes:

Although the new Yugoslavia was a federation of socialist national republics, to many Croats it seemed as if Serbia and the Serbs were still in control. Serbia was the largest national republic, Belgrade was still the capital of Yugoslavia, and Serbs played a dominant role in the Communist Party, the officer corps ... (and) the police. Communism and Serbian control were linked in the minds of many Croats.

Simic agrees with this characterization ("... Serbs were represented in disproportionately large numbers in the Yugoslav police, bureaucracy and armed forces"); he nonetheless asserts that Croatian claims of "Serbian hegemony" were "hardly justified," since, "The Tito government had effectively reduced the political power of the Serbs by the division of traditional Serbian lands between Serbia proper, Vojvodina, Kosovo and the newly-created republic of Macedonia." There is no apparent way to reconcile these views, but Despalatovic does provide one slight possibility when she conditions her remarks (as cited above) by stating, "in the minds of many Croats."

It is of course illusory to attribute the current conflict primarily to matters of perception, but culturally-based perceptions of differences are important as they condition the construction of

different pasts. The Serbian view of self as victim is constituted out of their shared memories and linked with their oral traditions. To them it is not incongruent that while Serb forces capture territory in Bosnia they nonetheless perceive themselves as the victims in the war. Despalatovic and Simic encapsulate Croatian and Serbian perspectives on other matters as well.

Thus Despalatovic refers to the Ustashe as, "a tiny, extreme nationalist political party which had spent most of the interwar period in exile." She further notes that the Nazi-sponsored state they established was, "an imposed and unpopular regime, and many more Croats joined the Partisans than supported the Ustashe." In contrast, Simic details Ustashe atrocities and estimates that they killed about 800,000 people, mainly Serbs, but also Jews, Gypsies and Croatian opponents. Though Despalatovic observes that "Thousands of Serbs were killed by Ustashe, others died in Ustashe run concentration camps," she mainly disagrees with Simic and states that "487,000 Serbs died in Yugoslavia from all causes during World War Two, of these 126,000 died in Croatia."

Simic provides a Serbian perspective about the sequence of events which led to the war in Croatia, specifically focussing on referendum of the Serbs in Croatia of May 14, 1991 when they then voted to secede should the Croats opt for independence. "Five days later the Croats not only took this course but also refused to recognize the results of the Serbian referendum." Of course, Despalatovic questions why a Serbian minority which "made up less than one-eighth of the population of Croatia in 1991 (should) be allowed to occupy one-third of Croatian territory. Why should the Croats in Serb-conquered regions be expelled from their homes and deprived of their property at gunpoint in the name of 'ethnic cleansing'?" Events move rapidly and since this contribution was written both Serbian and Croatian forces have seized additional territories in Bosnia. Some of Despalatovic's pertinent questions might now be applied to Croatian as well as Serbian forces in Bosnia as well.

Despalatovic suggests other analytical approaches on the current conflict when she refers to a "strange combination" of former communist leaders trying to hold onto power, a strong modern army without a state and the distrust of rural people for urban civilization (a point discussed earlier) combined with old national myths and twentieth century racism. Her comments tie in with a 1993 article in the Serbian independent magazine *Vreme* which referred to the anti-urban bias of the Milošević regime and the rural strength of Serbian proto-fascists like V. Šešelj and his nationalist party. This is also a point made by Prošić-Dvornić in her analysis of the student demonstrations in Belgrade. She says that the students were demonstrating in support of a civil society and

against the "primordial" nationalistic fears espoused by Milošević.

Like Despalatović, Simić notes that the leaders of the new politics in Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, and Macedonia all have communist party backgrounds. He points out the increasingly powerful role of religion and religious symbolism in the successor states of ex-Yugoslavia emerging from the collapse of secular communism. Religion is a powerful supporting pillar for the new nationalisms and is thus implicitly a causal factor in the current conflict. For example, Simić links the appearance of a sacred vision at Medjugorje in the Croatian region of Hercegovina to the Franciscans. He notes that this Catholic order was most closely tied to the Independent State of Croatia, and thus linked to Croatian nationalism. On the Orthodox side he refers to the newly completed Orthodox cathedral in Belgrade, "now the largest in Europe."

Many also consider premature Western recognition of both Croatia and Bosnia before the interethnic conflicts in each country had a chance to be effectively resolved to have been a key factor in precipitating the conflict. That is, the position of the Serbian population in each of these states was not effectively considered. In retrospect, it is not quite clear how this might have been accomplished in a way satisfactory to all parties concerned. However, it is significant that no creditable attempt was made. Also contributing to the war was the inability or the unwillingness of the Yugoslav National Army to play a peace-making role in the initial phases of the conflict and to control the aggression of various Serb and other irregular forces. The Yugoslav Army was, however, in fact, if not formally, a Serbian army and so supporting a Serbian cause was expectable behavior.

In his contribution Hayden raises the issue of Orientalism, particularly as applied to the Serbs (although one could also say that the Serbs have tried to Orientalize the secular European-oriented Bosnian Moslems by calling them fundamentalist and picturing themselves as the defenders of Christianity). Hayden begins this discussion by quoting a 1991 statement of a Slovene Minister of Sciences to the effect that the "basic reason" for the present crisis is the incompatibility of two main frames of reference/civilizations. "On one side, you have a typical violent and crooked oriental-byzantine (sic) heritage, best exemplified by Serbia and Montenegro. On the other side (Slovenia, Croatia) there is a more humble and diligent western-Catholic tradition." This minister sees independent (and westernized) Slovenia and Croatia acting as a "cordon sanitaire" against this "eastern" chaos.

It certainly is notable that the peoples of the Balkan periphery picture themselves as chosen

defenders of the Western core. The minister's observations, of course, also ignore the fact that the most inhuman savagery in World War Two originated in Germany in the Western core region. Such ideas of Balkan, Serbian Orientalism have been around a long time. The emigre Croatian sociologist Dinko Tomasić published on this theme in the U.S. in the early 1950s. Hayden views such ideas as racist and sees them as implicitly proposing a new iron curtain to be based on religious and cultural criteria.

These manifestations of chauvinistic nationalism in the successor states of ex-Yugoslavia are seen by Hayden to resemble most closely the situation in Central Europe in the 1930s or contemporary neo-fascist groups such as the National Front in France. He also links such ideas to those of the American politician Patrick Buchanan who stresses that the United States is a country of Western European culture and that future immigration from outside of Western Europe must be restricted. In the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe Hayden posits that this is not only associated with the rise of nationalism but also with the decline of the idea of a class focused view of the nation. As espoused by Marx this idea was, of course, part of the core ideology of the ex-Yugoslav communist state.

Also involved in the current rise of authoritarian nationalist governments is the demise of the Wilsonian perspective which sought to combine democracy with the creation of nations based on shared national identities. Brinca links Wilson to the Leninist view of nationality but, of course, this does not take into account Wilson's democratic idealism. Jan Urban, the Czech writer and former Civic Forum chairman, has expressed the view that,

The final tragedy (of ex-Yugoslavia) is that a Wilsonian vision of a new country that can rise above the many differences of its peoples, on the model of the United States, may just be impossible in a Europe with less space and longer historical memories. (in Michael D. Mosettig's review of, "Serbs and Croats: The Struggle in Yugoslavia, by Alex Dragnich, in *Europe*, p." 47, Dec.-Jan., 1992-93.)

The struggle is emphatically, of course, not due to ethnic hostilities alone but as Anthony Borden and Zoran Pajic write in *The International Herald Tribune* (1/28/93, p. 8) in "Bosnia:

The Vance-Owen Plan Won't Do"

...the world must adopt a broader more long-term view of the Balkans. A new approach would mean comprehending

extreme ethnic politics not as an inevitable result of historic animosities and post-Communist transformation but as deliberately manufactured politics by vicious populist leaders on all sides.