DYNAMICS OF SOCIALIST NATION-BUILDING: THE SHORT LIVED PROGRAMME OF PROMOTING A YUGOSLAV NATIONAL IDENTITY AND SOME COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

Dynamics of Socialist Nation-Building: The Short Lived Programme of Promoting a Yugoslav National Identity and Some Comparative Perspectives

Adopting a historical perspective, the article discusses the politics of nation building in Socialist Yugoslavia and the dialectics between Yugoslav national identity and national identities developed in the Federation's constitutive republics.

KEYWORDS: nation building, socialism, Yugoslavia

IZVLEČEK

Dinamika socialističnega oblikovanja nacij: Kratkotrajni program promocije jugoslovanske nacionalne identitete in nekateri primerjalni vidiki

Prispevek s historičnega vidika obravnava politike oblikovanja nacij v socialistični Jugoslaviji in dialektiko med jugoslovansko nacionalno identiteto in nacionalnimi identitetami, ki so bile oblikovane ali podpirane v posameznih republikah federativne države.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: oblikovanje nacij, socializem, Jugoslavija

For decades many believed that socialism – as the dominant ideology and political reality in South-eastern and Eastern Europe during the second half of the twentieth century – had resolved existing ethnic conflicts and the "national question", by concentrating on the (rhetoric of the) class struggle. However, by the beginning of the 1990s, even some experts were relatively surprised to observe the emergence of a multiplicity of national(istic) movements, which in many places led to violent conflicts: the breakdown of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia took place during a dreadful war, in a more or less conflict-torn manner numerous new nation-states came into being with the collapse of the USSR, and the dissolution of the Czechoslovak federation occurred during the course of an increasingly nationalistic polemic.

Contrary to what the leading Communist elite have declared for decades, Titoism in Yugoslavia or the Pax Sovietica in the Eastern Bloc have clearly not managed to overcome the "national problem". Although the histories of national or ethnic conflicts in South-

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eastern and Eastern Europe often reach back long before the period of real socialism, it appears that in the socialist decades, rather than being resolved politically, many "national problems" were simply transformed into new frameworks.

Various approaches can further our understanding of the boom in nationalistic movements after 1989. On the one hand, it makes sense to focus on the social dynamics that accompanied the breakdown of the socialist system and led to an increasingly nationalistic social reality during the course of the 1990s. Such approaches could be termed as more "contemporary" or "process oriented" and illustrate, for instance, how emerging nationalistic discourses are closely linked with new power relations and agency rationalities. No doubt, such research on political, social, and cultural dynamics promises to provide us with deeper insights into the complexities of the mentioned "nationalistic" turn after 1989.

Another way to deal with the mentioned wave of nationalism is to approach this problem through a more diachronic or "historical" analysis. Well-founded knowledge about the "national question" in different situations from the past can undoubtedly reveal important insights – including, indirectly, into the logic of the post 1989 national(istic) renaissance and nation-building dynamics.

For the purpose of this article I will adopt such a historical perspective. The paper concentrates on a historical re-consideration of the deeper reasons for nation-building activities during socialist rule, and, in principle, the following crucial question is somehow at the centre of interest: Why did the "national question" remain – despite the rhetorical turn to the "class question" – so immensely important, even in the socialist power system (so that in some situations it entered the centre of political life)?

In this article I will approach this question by discussing in particular nation-building politics in the former Yugoslavia and specifically one initiative: the attempt to create a "national Yugoslavism". This short-lived project, which was initiated in the second half of the 1950s and then suddenly stopped in the 1960s, might help to provide insights into certain decisions that were made about "nation-building" during the socialist period (and how these decisions strongly influenced further developments of the national question in the country). In the latter part of the article I will place the Yugoslav case into a wider comparative context. The hypotheses put forward at the end of the text still need to be seen as "work in progress", requiring verification in a further research process.[2]

THE IRRITATION: TITO'S REJECTION OF A "YUGOSLAV NATION" AT THE EIGHTH CONGRESS IN 1964

The following excerpt from a speech by Josip Broz Tito, party leader and president of socialist Yugoslavia, can be helpful with regards to the issue of "national relations" in socialist Yugoslavia at the height of so-called "Titoism". The quoted extract is from a general statement made by Tito at the eighth Congress of the League of Communists in 1964:

> The content of our [national] relations has to be of a kind where the Brotherhood and Unity of our peoples can develop further. However, there are persons, even communists, who have already become tired of this strong slogan of our People's Liberation War and who believe that nations have already been superseded by our socialist social development and that they actually should pass away [literally should 'die off' ('odumru')]. But these people are mistaking the union of our people with the liquidation of our nations and want the formation of something new and artificial: a uniform Yugoslav nation [emphasis mine]. … I know that only some are probably concerned, but these few can cause great damage. Insofar as these few are within our League of Communists, it has to be said, that there is no place for them among us, because they are harmful.3

This drastic statement was received with surprise and generated feelings of deep insecurity – in particular within the Party, but also in the broader spheres of society. Federal, republic, and district party leadership institutions were swamped with inquiries as to how Tito's statement should be understood, and there was concern that there would be no place in the Party for people who felt that they belonged first of all to a Yugoslav nation.

In previous years people had been accustomed to Tito and most other party leaders holding a decidedly "pro-Yugoslav" position. This was also very much the case at the Congress of the League of Communists in April 1958. At this Congress the "national relations" within the country were allocated only minor importance. This was in stark contrast with the Congress of 1964, where the national question assumed a crucial position. Tito alone devoted almost one third of his principal statement to it. Seen retrospectively, the time between the two congresses in question, i.e. the late 1950s and early 1960s, undoubtedly has to be seen as a decisive turning point in the handling of the national question in socialist Yugoslavia.

IN RETROSPECTIVE: ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF NATIONAL POLICY IMMEDIATELY AFTER WWII

With the seizure of power towards and after the end of the Second World War, the victorious Communist Party began, as is generally known, to endow the six nationally

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3 Arhiv Jugoslavije (AJ)/507-VII-A-CKSKJ I/VIII-K.1/2, 31–32.

defined republics with all the symbolic aspects of national communities. This took place within the framework of a federatively organised Socialist People's Republic and under the slogan of Brotherhood and Unity. Particularly in the three southern republics – which were approached with a discourse of "belated development" – the new regime just proceeded to systematically build up these nations. This is especially true for the Socialist Republic of Macedonia. After 1944/45 the standard literary Macedonian language was codified, "national" historiographical, literary, and ethnographic traditions were embarked upon, and the symbols and institutions – that a republic "needs" – were created and founded. In many respects this was also the case for Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Why, after the Second World War, did the national policy develop in this manner? At this point it shall suffice to refer to the following two reasons:

a) It was an attempt to create a new "national equilibrium" in the Yugoslav state through the formation of new nations. The introduction of a federative structure and the establishment of several new "national" republics were to help ease the smouldering nationalistic antagonisms of the interwar period, which had so brutally escalated during the Second World War. To some degree this solution was also just a pragmatic consequence of the course of the so-called Yugoslav People's Liberation War.

b) Nevertheless, the described approach to the national policy also explicitly followed the ideologically defined goals of socialism. In particular, the ideology of the emancipation of the "oppressed" "small nations" as an evolutionary step for realising the communist future was a very important source of legitimisation for such a policy. The discursive and real orientation of the model of the Soviet Union and Stalin's nation-building policy (later "exported" also by the strategic policy of the Comintern) can hardly be overlooked, and thus this aspect will be taken into further consideration in the comparative perspectives below.

THE BASIC PROBLEM: "NATIONALISATION" OF THE POPULATION

While establishing institutions according to national principles was still relatively easy to accomplish in the three above-mentioned socialist republics (this was also partly furthered by a relatively developed "national orientation" within parts of the regional party elite), the objectives of the Party – to "nationalise" the respective populations as fast as possible – did not proceed without a fair share of problems. All three new republics of the Yugoslav South were, when considering their ethnic, linguistic, and confessional composition, far from homogenous. In addition to a Slav-Orthodox majority, which was the focus of socialist "Macedonisation", Macedonia also had Albanian-speaking, mainly Muslim populations, as well as Serbian, Turkish, so-called Torbesh (Slavic-speaking Muslim), Aromanian and Roma populations. In Montenegro, the Slav-Orthodox majority was more pronounced, although there were also different minority populations. And here it was unclear whether the Slav-Orthodox population of the country would be more sympathetic to a "Serbian" national self-ascription or a "Montenegrin" one.

In Bosnia the constellation seemed to be even more complicated, with a considerable part of the population regarding itself as Serbian, and others who associated themselves with the Croatian nation. These two groups constituted the majority of the republic's population. However, the largest single population group were the Slavic-speaking Muslims, whose national affiliation was still undecided. In the beginning, the Communist leadership urged their Muslim Party members to declare themselves either as belonging to the Serbian or to the Croatian nation. A considerable number of them did indeed do so during the first censuses after the Second World War in 1948 and 1953, but during the 1950s a new social dynamic gained relevance with regard to this question. Beyond affecting the national self-identification of Muslim Party members in Bosnia and the Muslim population in general, it became a major trend in larger segments of Yugoslav society. It seemed to be particularly marked in the urban populations of the rapidly growing cities throughout the country. This phenomenon can be described as the development of "national Yugoslavism".

NATIONAL YUGOSLAVISM: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND IDEOLOGICAL PROJECT

The following quotation, from one of the meetings from the "Ideological Commission" of the Central Committee of the League of Communists, is helpful in illustrating the above-mentioned dynamic. This commission, which took over the heritage of the central "Agitprop" institution during the 1950s and was to later become increasingly thematically differentiated, was responsible for finding proper ideological guidelines for the social and political problems that had been raised. At the beginning of one of the meetings in 1960, an internal speaker introduced the (national) problem and began his statement by making reference to the (Bosnian) Muslims, who were actually the topic of that meeting, but his considerations went immediately beyond them:

> The large majority of the Muslims, particularly in Bosnia, have not declared themselves nationally and the process of national assignment is not going into the direction of a self-ascription as Serbs, Croats etc. There are also cases where Muslims, usually members of the League of Communists, who previously declared themselves as Serbs, Croats, etc. and nowadays declare themselves as "Yugoslavs". Even some Serbs, Croats, Montenegrins etc. have recently started to declare themselves as "Yugoslavs". This is particularly characteristic for the youth, which can be seen very clearly by a recent opinion poll, carried out on this topic by the editorial board of [the magazine] "Mladost".
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> Since there are more and more mixed marriages – today about ten percent of all marriages in the Federative Peoples Republic of Yugoslavia (FNRJ) are mixed marriages – for many it appears most normal that the children of these marriages declare themselves as "Yugoslavs".
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> Furthermore, according to the opinion of some, it is seen as a sign of progressive-

ness to declare oneself as "Yugoslav" and not as a member of a nation, since the national consciousness was born on a lower level of societal development and will ultimately be overcome with the development of socialism and socialist social relations anyhow. Many who support this notion also feel that it should also be made possible for Serbs, Croats, Montenegrins, etc, to declare themselves as "Yugoslavs", should they wish so.4

Later in the course of the meeting's discussion the topic was discussed in further detail with regard to the Bosnian Muslims. Already at an earlier occasion, during an inspection tour in Bosnia, the Ideological Commission gave instructions to the Bosnian Party comrades, which were written down in the commission's documentation in this way:

> We have said there that they can register as Yugoslavs. In the schools it is requested from the children that they declare themselves [nationally]. Also the statisticians complain that there is a problem about the different criteria within the population [to decide upon nationality] at the censuses, and that they would wish that this would have been already discussed thoroughly. It is a fact that nobody would be bothered by declaring himself as Yugoslav. One needs to talk with this regard with Kardelj [the chief-ideologist with regard to national questions in the Party] and we need to go at hand to them [the comrades in Bosnia] on that score. 5

As is generally known, the Bosnian Muslims were not recognised nationally as "Yugoslavs", but as a separate nation under the designation of "Musliman" (Muslim) in the 1960s (later, during the war of the 1990s "Bošnjak" (Bosniac) replaced "Musliman" as national self-ascription).

But as the above quotations illustrate, in the late 1950s there were clear tendencies for the formation of a Yugoslav nation, and respectively there were quite a few social groups that had a favourable view of this development. Apart from the here discussed Bosnian Muslims these were, for instance, children and partners in mixed marriages, obviously considerable parts of the youth, and also larger parts of the Party members seemed to have quite positive feelings vis-à-vis this "advanced development" in the national question.

But which official position did the Party assume towards this development? During the initial stages it was an explicitly positive one, although this position changed drastically at a later stage. Before we go into this more deeply, let us make mention of the constraints that the Yugoslav society, economy, and particularly the leadership of the Party saw itself confronted with at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s. At that time Yugoslavia seemed to have overcome the conflict with Soviet policy. The economic embargo implemented by the Soviet Union and the Comecon states as a consequence of the conflict with the Yugoslav Communists in the late 1940s brought the country to the verge of an economic collapse. But in the course of the 1950s the Yugoslav leadership managed to ease the conflict step

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[4] AJ/ 507-A-CK SKJ, VIII, II/2-b-142 (1–7) 1960.IX.23.
[5] AJ/ 507-A-CK SKJ, VIII, II/2-b-102 (1–2) (K-6).

by step. Moreover, this external confrontation had even managed to generate solidarity amongst the Yugoslav society with its Communist leadership. With substantial economic aid from the USA, the Yugoslav Communist leadership was able to overcome the threat of being "re-integrated" under Soviet control and gradually found a new place between the blocs of the Cold War. In the later 1950s, Yugoslavia joined the ranks of the countries with the fastest economic growth in the world (with yearly economic growth rates of between ten and fifteen percent).

As a result of such a "successful" development, which was increasingly accompanied by optimism on behalf of much of the population (cf. Grandits 2000), the Communist leadership, which was thirsty for action, turned to new challenges in its political mission: with the system of "worker self-management", an independent way for realising a socialist order was intensively discussed and also increasingly implemented (cf. for details Höpken 1984). The government, which despite being a federative state in reality functioned very centralistically and in many respects was very Stalinist up to the late 1950s, underwent a noticeable "liberalisation". As a further stage of development, the leadership of the Party supported the changes – since they seemed to be a movement "from below" – for speeding up efforts in the formation of "socialist Yugoslavism" as a "national feeling".[6]

The "nationalisation" of the six constituent republics under a federative roof and strong central control, so strongly promoted in the one-and-half decades after WWII, should now give way to the concept of socialist Yugoslavism. And the Party was instructed by its leadership to set on work this concept at first in cultural life (cf. Shoup 1968: 193f.). The institutional implementation of this new integrative concept of nation soon showed positive results. The biggest success was no doubt the agreement of the leading linguists and literature experts from Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Montenegro that they spoke variants of a common Serbo-Croatian language in Novi Sad in 1954 and the publication of a common orthography of the Serbo-Croatian (or Croato-Serbian) language in 1960 (cf. Okuka 1998: 78). It seemed that – despite sometimes irritating "interjections" from artistic, and respectively intellectual, dissidents (that the regime seemed to have under good control at that time) – there were enough social groups that supported the embarked way. At that time among others they also included the majority of the historians, who following the initiative of the Party joined an inter-republican Yugoslav historian association, worked on a Yugoslav encyclopaedia and at the beginning of the 1960s began publishing a Yugoslav historical journal.[7]

But resistance to the ongoing development began to form within the Party itself. This resistance was in principle not necessarily "nationally" justified. On the one hand the loosening of the central control on the economy and the increasing experimentation with the self-management system went against the grain of the so-called "liberalisation

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[6] Also the image of the country promoted to the international world obtained such a character, which can be very illustratively seen in the self-portrayal of Yugoslavia at the first world's fair after the Second World War, which took place in Brussels in 1958. Cf. in detail AJ/56-Generalni komisarijat Jugoslovenske sekcije opšte međunarodne izložbe u Briselu 1954–1959. Fasc. 7, 21, 24.

[7] Cf. for details AJ/ 684 – Savez istoričara Jugoslavije. Kut. 2–6.

opponents". These people began to group around the long-term Minister of the Interior, chief of the secret services, and at that time potentially a secret candidate for Tito's succession, Alexander Ranković. This group was increasingly worried about its future position in the Party and wanted to hold on the "tried and true" federatively organised rule under strong centralist control. On the other hand criticism was increasingly put forward about the management of the country's economic development by factions of the party leaders at the level of the republics. This was also caused by the fact that – despite industrial mega-projects in and massive flows of resources to, for instance, Montenegro, Macedonia or Bosnia – the differences in the standards of living between the republics of the north and those from the south had not really begun to shrink – on the contrary.[8]

POLITICAL U-TURN: THE PARTY'S RENUNCIATION OF THE PROJECT OF NATIONAL YUGOSLAVISM

The complete turnaround in policy towards the "Yugoslav nation" needs to be understood against the background of such diverging opinions about the "right line" for future socialist policy within the Party. Its abandonment was to some degree accepted as a kind of "collateral damage" in the political power games. In the course of the 1960s Tito obviously felt his dominant position within the Party too much put in question by Ranković and the adherents of an anti-liberal, respectively "centralist" policy. In such a situation, presumably also in an attempt to re-strengthen his own position, Tito decided to strongly back the political course that was anticipated by his chief ideologist Edward Kardelj. Kardelj's option foresaw a far-reaching progression of the system of worker self-management under the premises of federal de-centralisation (cf. here Jović 2003: 131–154). As a consequence of this decision, Ranković was openly accused of working towards the establishment of a centralist hegemony and "Greater Serbian" unitarianism. He was relieved of his position and finally expelled from the Party. This whole internal Party conflict was increasingly accompanied by a polemic against every kind of "exaggerated centralism", which was portrayed as the reason for all (economic) troubles. Yugoslavism as a national and "centralist" concept, up to then systematically promoted by the Party, fell victim to this Party conflict and the accompanying "anti-centralist rhetoric" (although Tito in later years and up to his death spoke nostalgically on many occasions about the idea of Yugoslavism).

The later progressing policy of decentralisation has to be seen closely linked to the growing importance that the leadership was willing to give to the development of its subsequently key prestige project: worker self-management. This project had been started already in the 1950s, but was now in the course of the 1960s affirmed as the key feature in realising the Yugoslav path to a socialist society and implemented step by step regardless of the consequences. In theory the development of self-management should

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[8] Kosovo was economically lagging far behind all other Yugoslav regions even from the South. Cf. here the numbers in Singleton 1976: 241–259.

have proceeded continuously to the point at which the working population would ideally have had the power to participate in all their affairs so that the state could sooner or later "die off" (Jović 2003).

The wider population experienced all these decentralisation and self-management policies together with two other policies/developments, which from the perspective of many made an even greater impact on their daily lives: a further expansion of the state welfare system and the increasing development of a consumer culture, which reached larger parts of the population in the 1960s. Although the "Yugoslav" consumer culture – actually an anachronistic feature in a socialist state – advanced in a markedly "Western" fashion (for an illustration of this it is enough to mention here, for instance, the shopping trips of masses of Yugoslavs to the shopping centres in neighbouring Western cities like Trieste or the very much "western" designed marketing industry), it's development was systematically but quietly supported by the regime's policy (cf. Patterson 2001). All these developments seem to have been received – despite the presence of economic problems and shortages – with approval across broad parts of the population.

The various reform plans and policies "for realising a better socialist future" became omnipresent in the Party-controlled public discourse throughout much of the 1960s. But especially the political decision to change the functioning of the state machinery in the direction of decentralisation opened up topics that a majority of Yugoslavs (including within the (Party-)elites) considered as having been already closed: the inner-Yugoslav distribution of power and closely bound to it again the "national question". The more decision-making powers were delegated to lower levels of the self-management, the more the role of the party leaders at local, regional and republic level was upgraded. It was in such a situation that the almost global anti-authoritarian wave of (youth) protest against the "system" (in the West the "1968 revolutions") reached Yugoslavia. It met a regime that was not willing to make any concessions to claimed "democratic" freedoms and was far from putting into question the absolute power monopoly of the Party. But the regime began to compensate for this in promising and later on also granting increasing "national freedoms". This was the atmosphere in which the idea of a socialist Yugoslavism was finally replaced by the concept of the unity of the Yugoslav nations and nationalities. The whole process of political change finally found its conclusion in the adoption of the constitution of 1974. This constitution massively transferred decision-making powers from the central Party institutions to the Party elites of the nationally defined constituent republics. At the latest from this period on these party elites at the republic level increasingly concentrated their activities more or less only on "their republic", and more and more competed for getting as much as possible from the overall state budget for their republic. Such a logic soon led to a rhetoric that became occupied with "national arguments" claiming for "just" national symmetries and quotas.

This development not only had consequences for the political power games, but became increasingly relevant for the daily life of the people. Something similar also became (again) observable for many regions in Yugoslavia, as has been summarised by Yuri Slezkine, for the USSR of the 1970s and 1980s:

Every Soviet citizen was born into a certain nationality, took it to day care and through high school, had it officially confirmed at the age of sixteen and then carried it to the grave with thousands of application forms, certificates, questionnaires and reception desks. It made a difference in school admissions and it could be crucial in employment, promotions and draft assignments. (Slezkine 1994–450)[9]

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES: IDEOLOGICAL ENTANGLEMENT AND PRAGMATIC IMPLEMENTATION

If we try to see the outlined development in Yugoslavia in relation to other socialist states, it is obvious – and the above discussion should have made this clear – how many specific characteristics the Yugoslav case had. Nevertheless, it is also possible to note corresponding features in the national or "ethnic" policies of other multi-national socialist states. This also had to do with the entanglement of socialist policy in South-eastern and Eastern Europe, which existed over many decades throughout the twentieth century.

The entanglement of national policies under socialism: how did this work?

These entanglements must be seen on different layers: biographical and power-political, and also ideological ones. Tito, as well as other leading Yugoslav communists, spent quite some time in the USSR in the period between WWI and WWII. There they closely monitored the implementation of Stalin's national policy and personally witnessed how nation building (*natsional'oe stroitel'stvo*) was carried out on a large scale in the early USSR. While in Tsarist times the population had been classified and ruled according to the categories of religion and language, the Soviet leaders wanted to break with this tradition after they assumed power. "Nation" should be the progressive, modern and new crucial principle of categorisation. For this purpose the different nationalities of the huge former Russian Empire (at the beginning of the twentieth century about 65 of the 140 million inhabitants of the Russian Empire were not Russians) had to be identified and in some cases also invented. In preparation for the first state-wide census of the Soviet Union in 1926, in which the population was to be counted according to nationality for the first time, the Soviet leadership (in realising the new constitution of the USSR) sent out ethnographers, statisticians and linguists throughout the huge country from Minsk to Vladivostok. They were ordered to identify which clans, tribes or nationalities belonged to which nation. In doing so the experts proceeded with relative "flexibility". Following the ideological position, to give "national freedom" (which was quite widely defined) to the people, the Soviet policy under Stalin established a multiplicity of ethno-territorially classified administrative units already in the 1920s. In the 1930s, in view of the difficulty

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9 Cf. for the working of such a policy of ethnicisation in everyday Soviet life see for instance Karklins 1986: 101–153.

of handing such an abundance of recognised nations, nationalities and national minorities – which spoke 192 recognised languages – it was decided, for pragmatic reasons, to only focus on the most important nations and nationalities. In the various republic territories, the nation-building processes of the titular nations of the respective republic were strongly pushed forward (although despite a strong reduction, a large number of autonomous regions on a national basis continued to exist) (cf. Hirsch 1997: 251–278). Towards the end of the 1930s, almost all the republics already had their own national union of writers, national theatres and scientific academies and institutions, which intensively embarked on producing the national histories, literature and languages of their republic (Slezkine 1994: 447).

Tito – like some other Yugoslav communist top cadres and so many of the communist politicians who came to power after 1945 in the different states of Eastern and South-eastern Europe – spent several years in the Soviet Union during this period of intensive nation building. It is unlikely that this was without influence on his visions about national policy, and the practical reality was that the Soviet Union served as the glorious role model that had to be followed – not to mention the directives of the Comintern which were also to be implemented (cf. here Shoup 1968: 35–59; cf. here also Sperber 1984.) Even when Yugoslavia broke with the Soviet Union in 1948 and began to work on realising a "different" kind of socialism than the Soviet Union, a certain ideological orientation towards the Soviet political ideology remained even then (although presenting the Yugoslav application of socialist ideology as the much more appropriate way). For instance, Edward Kardelj, the repeatedly mentioned ideologist of national and self-management policy in socialist Yugoslavia, related his theoretical legitimisation of the appropriate principle for future national policies in Yugoslavia of the 1960s and 1970s closely to Stalin's so influential theoretical work on "Marxism and the National Question" (see Stalin 1950 [1913]: 26–93). He did this also for the purpose of appropriately "defending" the planned and later adopted course for national policies in the Yugoslav context (cf. for instance Kardelj 1958).

This strong ideological commitment to the fundaments of communist ideological development (and that meant throughout the whole socialist world also the orientation towards the Soviet example) needs no doubt to be emphasised as a very significant element of the socialist nation-building policy. Socialist nation-building policies in the countries of Eastern and South-eastern Europe were always very much ideologically driven, were legitimised with many references to socialist theoreticians on the national question – from Marx, Otto Bauer, to Lenin, Stalin … and in the Yugoslav case Kardelj – and were per se actually convinced that the national problem would become obsolete in the socialist future. On the path to such a condition – as a transient stage in the development – the importance of the national was admitted, whereas the national in a socialist society always needed to be (according to Stalin's axiom) only "national in the form, but socialist in content".

Pragmatic implementation of ideological premises

In the practical experience of daily politics, the above-mentioned ideological foundations were, however, often quite practically "adapted" to the daily political needs of the Party. National policy was namely also one of the crucial aspects of socialist maintenance of power. It was repeatedly changed in reaction to political and social developments that threatened to become "problematic" to the regime. The results of this policy didn't share much in common with the ideological outlook that anticipated the "de-nationalised" social relations in the aspired socialist future. Quite the opposite was often the case. Reference may be made again, for instance, to the above-mentioned case of the Yugoslav resp. Bosnian Muslims, who – like Muslims in many regions of the Soviet Union – originally didn't define themselves in national terms, but were urged in the socialist order to declare themselves "nationally" (cf. Kappeler et al. 1989).

In general, socialist regimes were more willing to grant "national freedom" than to accept restraints in their exertion of power. A reinforcement of national policy, which in addition to party-internal power games also met with massive criticism from the authoritarian policy system in the late 1960s and early 1970s, has been addressed with reference to the Yugoslav case. There were similar occurrences elsewhere, with the case of the ČSSR being particularly prominent. The convulsion of the system in the Prague Spring in 1968 and the following reestablishment of authoritarian control went hand in hand with a dynamic impulse for nationalisation "from above". The ČSSR was federalised and republic status was implemented in the Czech lands as well as Slovakia. Instead of tolerating a more democratic pluralism, a pluralism of nationally defined polit-bureaucratic elites was installed. The transfer of power to now also nationally defined parts of the socialist system was to have stimulated new political dynamics within the system later on (cf. Eyal 2003). This tendency of "nationalisation" instead of "democratisation" was a political manoeuvre that in different forms has been consciously applied as well by other socialist regimes (e.g. Bulgaria, Romania) under the threat of losing power, i.e. in particular during the 1980s. Although knowing that such a policy could very much strengthen disintegrative dynamics – in particular in multi-national state like Yugoslavia (SFRJ) or the ČSSR – such a consequence was still hazarded as an instrument of power-politics.

CONCLUSIONS

In an attempt to give some answers to the question posed at the beginning of this working paper as to why the "national question" has remained so immensely important in the socialist system, it might be appropriate to argue in the following three ways:

a) Nation building was a strongly ideology-driven process: In the realisation of the "grand plan" of establishing an ideal, modern and above all future socialist society, national and nation-building policies always had an important – ideologically-theoretically founded – role. National "liberation" respectively acting against national "oppression"

was part of the ideological socialist "emancipation" discourse. Of course, in the aspired future of a classless society, the importance of the nations would fall away in the end anyhow. However, until this stage of social development could be reached, it would be necessary to come to grips with the existing "national realities" – of course by following the ideologically "correct" and Party formulated aims.

b) "Nationalisation" instead of "democratisation": In the practical reality, socialist regimes – even in situations of crisis – were hardly ready to put up with claims for allowing some democratic pluralism. However, they were much more open-minded with regard to approving so-called "national rights" in such situations – which often caused dynamics of "ethnicisation" or "nationalisation" in the following political relations and also in general social life.

c) Nation building was an important instrument of power within the rivalry of elites in the one-party-system: The national policy and in particular the nation-building policy was also "internally" and on different levels of the Party, a proven means to ensure or achieve power. This aspect needs to be especially emphasised here, since it reminds us that in addition to the "official line" in political life (at the national, regional and local level), there were always spaces for manoeuvre in the pursuit of working for "personal" attitudes and strategies – also with regard to "national policy".

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POVZETEK

DINAMIKA SOCIALISTIČNEGA OBLIKOVANJA NACIJ: KRATKOTRAJNI PROGRAM PROMOCIJE JUGOSLOVANSKE NACIONALNE IDENTITETE IN NEKATERI PRIMERJALNI VIDIKI

Hannes Grandits

Prispevek s historičnega vidika obravnava politike oblikovanja nacij v socialistični Jugoslaviji in dialektiko med jugoslovansko nacionalno identiteto in nacionalnimi identitetami, ki so bile oblikovane ali podpirane v posameznih republikah federativne države. Diskusija je osredotočena na vprašanje, zakaj je »nacionalno vprašanje« v socializmu ostalo tako pomembno in je bistveno vplivalo na razdelitev moči v socialističnem sistemu ne glede na retorično poudarjanje »razrednega vprašanja«. V prispevku je podrobno obravnavana kratkotrajna pobuda za ustvarjanje »nacionalnega jugoslovanstva«, ki prispeva k boljšemu razumevanju strategij oblikovanja nacij v jugoslovanskem prostoru v obdobju socializma. V zadnjem delu prispevka je jugoslovanski primer umeščen v širšo perspektivo in avtor ga primerja s politiko oblikovanja nacij v Sovjetski zvezi.