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THE ETHNIC ATTITUDES OF YOUTH IN YUGOSLAVIA

I. Introduction*

The idea of Yugoslavs being – or becoming – a single ethnic entity has a history that is more than a century old. It started mainly with the vision of harmoniously resolving Serbo-Croatian relations, but it expanded to include other groups as well. This idea of unity was part of the official ideology of the first Yugoslav state (1918–1941), the formula being Yugoslavia as a single „tri-tribal“ people. The idea of ethnic unity lost much of its plausibility during this period, because most of the South Slav Nationalities had already been constituted, the general conditions were unfavorable, with ethnic differences becoming a source of social conflict and, in particular, because the idea of ethnic unity was politically instrumentalized.

This idea of Yugoslav ethnic unity was not part of the ideology promoted by the Communist-led National Liberation Movement during World War II or of the postwar period. Instead, there was the formula of the „brotherhood and unity“ of Yugoslav nations, encompassing the idea of each nation's affirmation and the parity of national groups, with loyalty to Yugoslavia as a whole guaranteeing this parity and ensuring some common functions of the social system.

Although the South Slav nationalities are today an established fact, along with other national groups living in Yugoslavia, and although the histories of these groups' nationhood are very different, the idea of Yugoslav ethnic unity persists, at least as an undercurrent.

In the postwar period, the Yugoslav identification remained for unusual and exceptional cases. This was true until the 1981 population census showed that 5.4% (1.219.000) of Yugoslavia's inhabitants opted for the Yugoslav identification in the ethnic sense, making it a phenomenon which could no longer be regarded as marginal. Its distribution was unevenly concentrated – mainly in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (8% of the population in each opted for this identification). It was also found to

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be more concentrated among the younger and the more educated. (Vušković: 1982).

In our research we wanted to determine the present extent and certain structural traits of the Yugoslavist orientation among young Yugoslavs, distinguishing in our focus between declarations of actual belonging (where objective circumstances, particularly ancestry, are expected to play a major role) and preferences and strivings as to ethnic identification (where statements are more expected to express subjective, emotional and volitional aspects).

2. Problem

Ethnic belonging is usually taken to be an objective, ascriptive trait of a person's status. But as E. Renan remarked in the last century, ethnic belonging also has a subjective, volitional dimension. (E. Renan: 1882). Not only can a person change his nationality, but whole new ethnic groups may appear, while others disappear, merge etc. Of course, these possibilities are always structured by objective circumstances, but there is a dialectic between objective and subjective (in particular volitional) elements within these processes.

In view of the changing attitudes to the nature of Yugoslav identity as noted in the Census of 1981, we wanted to know more about how this is manifested among young Yugoslavs, as the young are often the vehicles of new trends. In a wider survey of the social position, attitudes and values of Yugoslav youth (Vrcan et al.: 1986) the matter of ethnic (national) identity was also considered.

3. Method

This survey was carried out in late 1985, on a sample (N = 6250) representing Yugoslav youth population aged 14 to 27. The sample construction recognized five contingency strata: secondary school students, university students, employed, unemployed and youth active in agriculture. Other criteria and steps were also applied to achieve a representative sample, combining stratifying and random procedures. The interview was conducted in the language chosen by the respondent within a range of expected languages in the different communities.

The questionnaire covered most areas of relevance to drawing a social, political and psychological profile of Yugoslav youth.

The survey was organized by Zagreb University's Institute for Social Research and by the Center for Research, Documentation and Publishing attached to the Union of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia.

The results were processed electronically.

Two questions were posed directly to obtain data on the ethnic identity of youth in Yugoslavia. Respondents were first asked to declare to which nation they belonged (national adherence), and then, they were asked what their preferred national identification was, irrespective of objective conditions and constraints. The second question was designed to determine the extent of latent Yugoslavism, in contrast to the dominantly ascriptive nature of declaring national adherence.

4. Findings

a. *Ethnic identification and Preference*

The aggregate results of the answers to the two questions are presented in Table I.

TABLE I: *Declaration of nationality (national belonging) and Declaration of national preference*

Declaration of National Preference	Declaration of Nationality					
	Serb	Croat	Slovene	Maced.	Monten.	Alban.
Serb	31	0	0	0	0	0
Croat	0	40	0	0	0	0
Slovene	0	0	67	0	1	0
Macedonian	0	0	0	41	0	0
Montenegrin	0	0	1	0	32	0
Albanian	0	0	0	0	0	78
Muslim	0	0	0	0	0	1
Yugoslav	4	1	1	0	1	0
Other	0	1	0	0	0	0
Total	9	7	6	4	1	7
N = 6 149						
	Muslim	Yugoslav	Other groups	No answer	Other ans.	TOTAL
	0	42	1	21	4	27
	0	25	1	23	7	17
	0	10	1	9	11	8
	0	29	0	22	7	9
	0	45	0	16	7	3
	1	3	0	14	3	8
	20	43	1	29	5	8
	0	68	1	18	7	16
	0	40	33	23	4	3
	2	36	2	20	6	
	(in percents)					

Note: The next - to - the - last horizontal category („Other“) pertains to national groups (minorities) other than Albanians (Hungarians, Romanians, Italians, Slovaks, Ruthenians, Turks etc.) or ethnic groups which do not have the status of a national group (Romanies, Wallachs etc.) or to where a non-national (non-ethnic) regional or similar identification was expressed in the answer. The next - to - the - last column („Other answers“) registers only answers which did not pertain to national (ethnic) entities.

It should be noted that a large number of respondents either did not wish to answer the second question (on ethnic preference) or gave answers which were out of context. This probably means that the degree of identification was not particularly strong or that the question had no meaning for them. The latter could partly imply an overcoming of (the narrower forms of) ethnic identification without it leading to a Yugoslavist identification. The incidence of such answers was particularly high among those identifying themselves as Slovenians and it was the lowest among those identifying themselves as Albanians.

The major finding in Table I is that 16 % of our respondents declared themselves to be ethnic Yugoslavs. That is a finding which has not been noted either in official postwar censuses or in empirical surveys. The last census, however, did find a higher concentration of respondents declaring themselves ethnically as Yugoslavs among the young, among the more educated and in certain geographic regions. (Vušković: 1980).

Also, more than one third of the young Yugoslavs declared that they would prefer to call themselves Yugoslavs in the ethnic sense were it not for objective constraints. This constitutes a major difference in the distribution of answers regarding objective and preferred adherence, suggesting the presence of a hidden, latent Yugoslavist orientation among a large number of young people in Yugoslavia. Of those who do not call themselves Yugoslavs in the ethnic sense of the term, Yugoslav preference can most commonly be found among Montenegrins, Muslims and Serbs. The least preference is found among young Albanians and the number is also relatively low among young Slovenians. A situation has appeared where among the young members of certain Yugoslav nationalities only a minority wishes to style itself according to what they declare as their objective adherence, this being the case of Muslims, Montenegrins, Serbs, Croatians and Macedonians. We find that the „objective“ nationality is also the most commonly preferred among young Albanians (78 %), and young Slovenians (67 %).

The profile of the young people who declare themselves as Yugoslavs in the ethnic sense may be interesting, in particular if we are not dealing with a transitory and ephemeral phenomenon but with one which may indicate certain in-depth integrational processes. It should be noted here that more than four fifths of those who preferred to declare themselves as Yugoslavs in the ethnic sense come from groups in which Serbo-Croatian is spoken as the basic language of communication, as the native tongue.⁽¹⁾ This certainly influences the attitude to this phenomenon of those who do not prefer Yugoslavism as an ethnic identification and who at the same time speak another language as their own. The latter may have an adverse attitude towards those who do declare themselves as ethnic Yugoslavs, being afraid that the „would be Yugoslavs in the ethnic sense“ would one day stigmatize those who do not accept such an ethnic view and that the „would be-s . . .“ could attempt to negate the idea of Yugoslavia as a „community of equal nations and nationalities.“

b. Structural Sources of Ethnic Yugoslavism

Data in Table II indicate some of the structural sources of contemporary Yugoslavism: (1) the republics and provinces from which those with such an orientation are recruited, and (2) the extent to which an ethnically heterogenous background (parents of different nationality) contributes to this phenomenon.

The figures in the last column of Table II show the relative extent of the Yugoslav identification and Yugoslavist orientation by republics and provinces. Compared to the Yugoslav average, Bosnia and Herzegovina presents a contradictory picture. There is an above-average difference between the Yugoslav identification (low) and the Yugoslavist orientation as latent Yugoslavism (high). More than half of the respondents accept the Yugoslavist orientation as preferred identification, but few are ready to renounce their national identification in the narrower sense. This finding is understandable if we bear in mind the traditional prominence of the Yugoslav idea in Bosnia and Herzegovina (the „Young Bosnia“ movement at the beginning of the century). But

Table II: *Declaration of nationality as Yugoslav, declaration of national preference as Yugoslav, parents national belonging by regions*

Parents Ethnic Back ground Region	Non-id- entical	Yugoslav	Serbs	Croats	Slovenes	Macedon.
Yugoslavia	34/51(8)	100/65	4/43	4/26	—	—
Bosnia and Herz.	58/66(8)	100/67	9/44	5/41	—	—
Montenegro	42/58(5)	—	—	—	—	—
Croatia	39/54(10)	99/59	12/38	2/22	—	—
Kosovo	12/31(1)	—	—	—	—	—
Macedonia	2/48(1)	—	—	—	—	0/28
Slovenia	12/14(10)	—	—	—	0/10	—
Serbia	35/53(6)	100/70	3/44	—	—	—
Vojvodina	36/58(12)	100/71	3/42	8/59	—	—
Monteneg.	Albanians	Muslims	Hungar.	Rumanians	Other ident.	TOTAL
—	—	—	—	—	2/25	16/36
—	—	9/47	—	—	12/26	8/52
2/38	—	0/29	—	—	69/59	11/40
—	—	—	—	—	0/37	16/31
—	0/1	—	—	—	3/32	1/6
—	—	—	—	—	12/24	2/29
—	—	—	—	—	39/28	4/11
—	—	—	—	—	2/63	19/50
—	—	—	3/30	0/17	0/59	14/47

Note: Data for groups of 5 % and more in the entire sample and samples for the regions are presented only, with the exception of „non-identical background“ and „other identical“ national background of parents which are presented irrespective of their relative size. The number before the slash in every column denotes the percentage of respondents from that region who declare themselves as Yugoslavs in the ethnic sense, whereas the number behind the slash denotes the number who preferred that identification. The number in the first column in parentheses denotes the percentage of respondents who declared themselves to be of ethnically mixed parentage.

we should remember that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a community with three traditional ethnicities, of which the Muslims have only recently attained this status.

We also find a rather large difference between true and preferred national identification in Montenegro. This is primarily due to the fact that official recognition of Montenegrin nationhood came only recently. Those who prefer Yugoslav identifi-

cation in that case most often have parents of identical national background which is neither Montenegrin nor Muslim (usually Serbian and Croatian). While tending towards Yugoslavism, the youth of Montenegro are not ready to renounce their recently acquired nationhood.

We see that in Croatia the Yugoslavist preference is on a par with the average for the entire sample, but is significantly lower among respondents who state that both their parents Croatian. Since, historically speaking, both the origin and greatest contestation of the idea of Yugoslavism came from Croatian lands, the level of its acceptance today is relevant. We may conclude that in this region when the ideas of Yugoslavism is accepted, it is relatively more often accepted to the full and the difference between the level of declaration of Yugoslavism as an ethnic identification and as a preference is narrower.

At the time of the data collection, Kosovo was a specific area, and the conditions for conducting the survey may not have been fully present. Here, the general acceptance level of the Yugoslav ethnic option is the lowest among the observed regions of Yugoslavia. This is especially evident among respondents whose both parents are ethnic Albanians. The incidence of the Yugoslav option is somewhat higher (although still below the average) amongst youth who are from mixed marriages and is almost up to the Yugoslav average among those whose parents are of „other identical national background“ (usually Serbians). Because the latter account for only a small part of the Kosovo sample, this does not change the overall picture for Kosovo. The fact that Kosovo youth adhere the least to the Yugoslav identification (in the overt and in the covert ethnic sense) can be explained by the late national awakening of Kosovo Albanians, with its romanticist and sometimes secessionist traits.

In Macedonia, too, we observe a rather low level of national identification in the Yugoslav sense. This can be explained by the fact that Macedonians only recently gained acceptance as a nationality, and that the Yugoslav idea does not have a long tradition in this land. Significantly higher is the level of preferential Yugoslavism, explainable by the Macedonians' satisfaction with the state of affairs where they are accepted as equals in the community of Yugoslav nations.

In Slovenia, we again note a very low level of Yugoslavism as an ethnic identification and a moderately low level of Yugoslavism as a preferential identification. Respondents of Slovenian ancestry never declare themselves as Yugoslavs in the ethnic sense. However, answers to this effect come from respondents whose parents are of non-identical nationality or of other nationalities. As for preference, we find that the answers regarding Yugoslavism come primarily from those whose parents are both Slovenians: one out of every ten respondents of Slovenian parentage wishes to be an ethnic Yugoslav. In other words, the tide of Yugoslavism did not completely bypass this region.

There are different reasons why Slovenian youth do not accept a Yugoslav identification to a greater degree: basically it is a matter of a stable attitude as to what Yugoslavia should be – political union in the form of a (federal) state, with no assimilation in the cultural realm, particularly as it regards language. Ivan Cankar, the celebrated Slovenian writer, expressed this idea before World War I, correcting some of the positions of Slovenian Social Democrats. (Cankar: 1956, 71). There are other reasons why Slovenians do not accept ethnic Yugoslavism, and they have to do with current problems in the functioning of the Yugoslav society. The country's social crisis has also manifested itself as an alienation of Slovenian youth from dominant institu-

tions and values. (Vrcan et al.: 1986).

We find that the idea of Yugoslavism is most strongly manifested in Serbia proper (only as preferred identification is it negligibly higher in Bosnia and Herzegovina). It seems that the youth who adhere to the Yugoslavist idea have declared their parents to be Yugoslavs too, and we find that in Serbia proper it is the youth of Serbian parentage who adhere least to the Yugoslav identification.

Historically, the prominence of Yugoslavism in Serbia may, at first glance, be an unexpected or at least a new phenomenon, in view of the traditional greater Serbia ideology and strategy as it was formulated by I. Garašanin in the 19th century. „Greater Serbia“ was to encompass all lands where Serbs live. In order to achieve this, it would have to encompass parts of other nations. The idea of Yugoslavia as a multinational, pluralist state at the time did not gain much support. A new turn came in the 1930's when the idea of „Yugoslav integralism“ („unitarism“) was instrumentalized as a formula for giving legitimacy to an autocratic regime sometimes labeled as to its ethnic content as „greater Serbian hegemony“. The Yugoslav idea was given a bad name during this period and ethnic Yugoslavism ceased to be acceptable to any of the major factors or groups. With such a historical background, the fact that the Yugoslavist orientation is gaining support and plausibility among Serbs may cause mistrust among others, particularly among the elderly who may interpret it on the basis of past events.

Lastly, the data for Vojvodina show that in this nationally most complex region of Yugoslavia there is an above-average preference for Yugoslavism coupled with a slightly below average level of Yugoslav ethnic declaration. Though it is not clearly visible from the data in Table II, the Yugoslav preference does have significant support among ethnic groups clustered as „other national groups“ (particularly among Bohemians and Ruthenians. This indicated that the Yugoslav preference is not only a matter of Serbs and Croats, or even only of Slavs (2), but rather has the dimension of a special type of social relationship characteristic of the normative order in Yugoslavia, centering on the idea of self-management.

In contrast to preference, as latent Yugoslavism, Yugoslavism as factual national identification can be found in Vojvodina mostly among those who declare their parents to be ethnic Yugoslavs or who come from ethnically mixed marriages (which are most common in Vojvodina).

How important has the role of ethnically mixed parentage been in the appearance of a youth ethnically declared as Yugoslav?

In our sample, one out of every twelve respondents comes from an ethnically mixed marriage. This figure is somewhat underestimated because some of the respondents from ethnically mixed marriages declared their parents to be Yugoslavs in the ethnic sense. According to the data presented in Table II, the number of mixed marriages is highest in Vojvodina – and indeed it is: 30 % in 1984 (Petrović: 1985: 60) – Followed by Croatia and Slovenia, whereas it is lowest in the more traditionalist regions of Kosovo and Macedonia where such marriages are rare. – The number of mixed marriages accounts for 13 % of all marriages (according to the 1981 Census). (*Statistički bilten 1295*, 1984).

The study of the influence that parental nationality has upon young people's national identification as Yugoslavs is hampered by the respondents declaration that their parents are also Yugoslavs by ethnic identification. To some extent, this is psychological projection. Some parents might give the same response, but certainly not

Ethnically non-identical parentage is, on the whole, a conducive factor toward identification as an ethnic Yugoslav, but it is certainly not the only cause. At the level of the entire sample, twice as many young people with parents of different nationalities declare themselves as ethnic Yugoslavs, while the ratio for preferred identification is somewhat less pronounced in comparison with the overall average. But the relevance of this factor is not the same in all the observed regions. In Vojvodina and Slovenia the influence of parental ethnic heterogeneity is much more important in this respect than in other regions. However, with regard to preferred identification, which we regard as latent Yugoslavism, nowhere do we find that an ethnically mixed ancestry plays an important part. Other studies show that ethnic Yugoslavism is higher in ethnically mixed regions and local communities. (Vušković: 1982; Raič: 1982).

What would happen if we turned our relationship around and posed the question in the following manner: what kind of ancestry do those of Yugoslav identification or preference have? We would find that some 30% come from ethnically mixed marriages and that 15% of those who prefer such an identification are of ethnically mixed parentage. Therefore, mixed parentage is a more important factor in identification than in preference, as one might theoretically expect.

The number of people who prefer Yugoslavism is more than double that of people who unconditionally accept it as an ethnic identification. But this relationship is not the same for all regions or for those of different ethnic extractions.

In view of what has been said about declaring one's parents ethnic identification (as being possibly a projection of the respondent's own attitude) it may be surprising that all such respondents (who declare their parents to be Yugoslavs in the ethnic sense) do not declare themselves to be ethnic Yugoslavs as well. This may be an indication that the Yugoslav ethnic identification has, in a sense, been institutionalized and that the young do not always experience it as something new, original and autonomous. This may come as a surprise given the present institutional circumstance where the Yugoslav identification is not an officially recognized nationality. These young people (who declare their parents but not themselves to be Yugoslavs) may again be turning toward more narrow identifications, as being historically more reliable, more defined and more meaningful. In a crisis situation such a tendency would be more plausible.

A second trend which may be noted at the level of Yugoslavia as a whole is that Yugoslavism is opted for – especially as a preferred identification – by respondents whose parents belong to larger nationalities. Size itself is of relevance here, but so are the historical circumstance that originally linked Yugoslavism to the Serbo-Croatian relationship and the regions where this language is spoken. Today we may also view Yugoslavism, at least *in nuce*, as a type of social relationship, based on free association, parity and self-management. Therefore, we note the presence of the Yugoslavist orientation in almost all national groups (the situation for certain smaller ones cannot be discerned from Table II).

Respondents whose parents are Serbs and Croats were observed to show a greater Yugoslavist orientation when residing outside Serbia proper and Vojvodina in the former case and outside Croatia in the latter,

In our sample, Slovenians, Muslims and Albanians by parentage do not declare themselves as Yugoslavs in the ethnic sense, but they do express, to varying degrees, a Yugoslav ethnic preference.

It has already been noted by other authors (Dugandžija: 1984) that historically Yugoslavism has been concentrated among intellectuals, the free professions, and among all those who needed views broader than the ones provided by traditional ethnic *weltanschauungen*. (Dugandžija: 1984, 81). In contrast to the peasantry, the bourgeoisie and even the greater part of the intelligentsia, Yugoslavism appeared as a somewhat nebulous, too loosely defined concept which did not provide sufficient symbolic content or reliability. It is relevant, therefore, to determine the importance of stratification here (Corrected correlation coefficient = .27) indicating a moderate connection between social status and ethnic non-orientation as Yugoslav. A Yugoslav preference increases from one-fifth of the respondents who have not finished elementary school to approximately two-fifths of those who have finished secondary school or more. When considering the basic social groups („contingency strata“) the analysis showed that the Yugoslav orientation and identification was strongest among university students, but differences themselves were not significant.

The older respondents in the youth sample were somewhat more oriented towards Yugoslavism, though it is known that, on the whole, the youth are more Yugoslavist oriented than the general population.

Females were moderately more likely to opt for a Yugoslav ethnic identification (41 %) than males (32 %).

As for social background (parents' occupations), no significant influence was found.

5. Discussion

The Yugoslav nationality does not at present exist as a constituted entity. Our findings cannot, in this respect, serve as a definite basis for a conclusion, but they may be an indication that we are witnessing events which are not just ephemeral or a fad, but rather a historically conditioned process of ethnic melting which could, over a period of time, bring about a constituted and stabilized Yugoslav nationality. This is not to say that the process would be a repetition of those that occurred a few centuries ago in France or in the last century in the German lands.

Even if a Yugoslav nationality were to be constituted, presuming the circumstance were favorable, it could be nothing else than one of the many ethnic communities on Yugoslav soil. As a relatively young ethnic entity, the Yugoslavs would not necessarily be free of all romanticist attributes. There are at present no possibilities for their hegemony, as they are often the object of stigmatization.⁽³⁾ There is nothing to guarantee that with the change in their social position – not in view today – their psychological attitude toward other nationalities would not change as well. It is more probable that we will not see the complete formation of Yugoslavs as a nationality. Historical experience tells us as much. The biographies of people who in their youth adopted a Yugoslavist orientation often reveal a difficult and and painful sobering process, with transferrals to narrower identifications. In difficult, crisis moments, the more narrow identifications showed themselves to be more reliable, offering more symbolic shelter. Today's great cultural, ideational heterogeneity of the young in Yugoslavia (Vrcan et al.: 1986) also speaks against the possibility of constituting a Yugoslav ethnicity, i. e. it indicates that this type of declaration is an act of volition, unbacked by cultural homogeneity. The historical development of the nationalities of

Yugoslavia is very uneven and they might be, in very different degrees and modes, willing to be assimilated into a wider entity. There is also the question of the language of the Yugoslav nationality; as it is implicit that it would be Serbo-Croatian a solution not acceptable to others.

Finally, let us pose a few hypotheses concerning the inner meaning of Yugoslavism as an identification for part of the youth of Yugoslavia:

– some may opt for Yugoslavism as a form of protest against what they see as the fragmentation of the Yugoslav state. (Čimić: 1982):

– Yugoslavism may express a yearning for a true human community in which no mediation would exist, where relations among men would not be conditioned by partial interests. Yugoslavism, in this sense, is a movement toward a non-nation utopia. In this respect, Yugoslavism can be close to a secular religiosity where mystical unity would deliver Yugoslavs from present day difficulties.

Both of these hypothetical types of Yugoslavism, were they to expand, might give rise to something Yugoslav terminology calls „unitarism“ (the negation of national diversities and autonomy). But that is not necessarily the path any successful Yugoslavism will take.

END-NOTES

1. According to the 1981. Census, of those who declared themselves as Yugoslavs in the ethnic sense, 94 % considered Serbo-Croatian as their mother tongue. (Statistički bilten 1295).
2. On the basis of the 1981 Population Census Raič concluded that the Yugoslav ethnic identification can, in Vojvodina, be traced to allethnic extractions present in that region. (Raič: 1982).
3. D. Bilandžić described the growth of the Yugoslav ethnic identification in the 1981 Census as a sign „something being wrong with society“, as a „not normal phenomenon“ (Vjesnik, May 8, 1982). J. Vidmar, the noted dean of Slovene cultural life, saw those identified as Yugoslavs in the ethnic sense as „completely undeveloped, narrow-minded and uneducated people.“ (Teleks, Feb. 10, 1983, 15).

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