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Serbian Nationalism and the Origins of the Yugoslave Crisis

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Book Notes

VESNA PESIC, SERBIAN NATIONALISM AND THE ORIGINS OF THE YUGOSLAV CRISIS; Peaceworks No. 8; United Nations Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C. (1996); 41 pp. (paperback). For free copies, contact United States Institute of Peace.

Serbian Nationalism and the Origins of the Yugoslav Crisis is the eighth paper in the Peaceworks series published by the United States Institute of Peace. The Peaceworks series is intended to promote peaceful solutions to international conflicts by disclosing the findings of the nonpartisan institution created by Congress. The author of this study, Vesna Pesic, takes seriously the roles of researcher and suggestion-maker by writing a concise and understandable survey of the beginnings of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Her study includes suggestions for the international community. She intends for her suggestions to be considered when countries erupt with internal crises which resemble Yugoslavia's struggle with a variety of ethnic groups attempting to maintain separate cultural and political control for each ethnicity. The struggle to maintain territorial integrity by each ethnicity in Yugoslavia created the "national question" that was never adequately addressed there. The Yugoslav response to the national question is the focus of Pesic's paper.

Pesic labels the ethnic struggle that took place in Yugoslavia a national question. It is easiest to understand what she means by looking to the meaning of the three parts that she divides the national question into. First, Pesic details the internal institutional structures that were in place in Yugoslavia and points out that the structures were inconsistent with one another and were inherently unable to achieve the goals of a united federation. After World War I, Yugoslavia was formed by combining the various republics of Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, among others, under one common democratic government. However, the common government could not quell the strong cultural ties within each ethnic group and the feelings of mis-

trust between the separate republics and peoples. The major conflicts arose between the Croats with the majority of Croats living in a single republic and the Serbs who were spread throughout the federation. The Croats believed that an independent nation for Croatia and the Croatian people utilizing their ability to produce, sell, and compete economically was the best answer to ensure the integrity of Croatian culture and livelihood. Alternatively, the Serbs believed in the continuing unification of the various states under a single government. While the Serbs could not claim a strong economy to support their cause, they did control the army and threatened to use it whenever there was talk of breaking up. The Serb backing for either a strong federal government or for outright rule by Serbs varied with the political leanings of the republics at a particular time.

Due to the reasons listed above, the first Yugoslavia failed to answer the needs of the various ethnic groups organized under one state. The democratic nation ended. After World War II, the first Yugoslavia collapsed leaving the path clear for communism to try to answer the national question. In the end, neither communism nor democracy provided the calming answer to the intense feelings felt by each ethnicity. Instead, each system combined to encourage and to fuel the ethnic conflicts that were bound to ignite.

Second, the author examines the role that Serbian *ressentiment*, the feeling of being threatened and hated throughout Yugoslavia, played in bringing about the violence that ultimately ended Yugoslavia. Due to these strong feelings, Serbs were unwilling to look for solutions to the ethnic struggles within Yugoslavia. They believed in maintaining a strong central government that protected the Serbs. Serbs threatened that if member nations did not voluntarily maintain a federal government that served the Serbian interests, Serbs throughout Yugoslavia would unite and fight for a Serb conscious government. The Serb leaders capitalized on the Serbian's fear that it was subject to potential exploitation and possible control by other Yugoslavian republics. This caused the tensions among the ethnic groups to escalate.

Third, the author interprets the collapse of authoritarian rule as a primary point that was not addressed properly by the Yugoslavian government or by the international community. As communist regimes throughout Eastern Europe failed, the Yugoslav republic's leaders were forced to address the specific elements of the national question and to find the optimal solution for withdrawing from communism which would allow them to maintain their positions of power. The republics began to favor the dominant ethnic majority within their borders and to discriminate against ethnic minorities. A unified belief among all Yugoslavia was no longer a possibility. Finally, the disintegration of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia left an inadequate system of free elections and political pluralism among the republics with no method of compromise to resolve the national question for each republic. Violence and warfare became the solution to the national question.

Following the analysis of these three factors, the author suggests some general recommendations for the international community to use

with countries plagued with internal conflict similar to Yugoslavia. Pestic suggests that the international community intervene to prevent "all or nothing" results to the national question. By stepping in and advising compromise and negotiation, the international community should assist the struggling countries to find a solution to internal conflict other than war. Intervention is triggered when there is no internal consensus on terms for proposed new states, borders, the treatment of minorities, or cooperation and security agreements. Pestic also suggests that the international community formulate a standard policy that applies to all countries facing internal conflict, rather than varying the policy with each particular situation. The international community should insist that claims to collective rights by the majority must not infringe on individual rights of the minority, as well as the majority. Pestic believes an international system should be adopted for a renegotiation of boundaries when disputes arise and threaten a population's security.

This study takes an important look at the internal causes of the Yugoslavian crisis and offers some important conclusions that the international community should recognize. Pestic's recommendations are based on common sense and are feasible to implement.

Cindy Ferrier

WANG GUIGO AND WEI ZHENYING (Eds.), *LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS IN CHINA: MARKET ECONOMY AND LAW*, Sweet & Maxwell, Hong Kong (1996); (\$96.00); ISBN 0-421-56890-9; 426 pp. (paperback).

Since 1994, the City University of Hong Kong and the Law Department of Peking University have held annual academic conferences to achieve a better understanding between the people of Hong Kong and Mainland China. This book is a collection of articles delivered at the October 1995 conference held in Hong Kong.

The 23 articles in this book are divided into six parts. Part One acquaints the reader with the concept of a market economy in modern China. The section begins with an article by Albert H.Y. Chen which distinguishes the connecting legal theories behind a "market economy" and a "planned economy." This article is followed by a discussion of the new administrative law in China. Part 1 is concluded by illuminating India's experience in changing from a mixed economy to a market economy.

Parts Two and Three are dedicated to a comprehensive discussion of China's business law. This section includes topics ranging from corporate law in Hong Kong to contemporary market economies to mathematical jurisprudence. Information throughout these articles include topical matters such as the family-oriented corporate structure in Hong Kong; the history and background of The Securities and Futures Commission of Hong Kong; the role of the Central Bank of China in the new market reform era; and the problem of contract interpretation under the socialist