

# Distinguishing 'self' and 'other'

## Anthropology and national identity in former Yugoslavia

### ALEKSANDAR BOŠKOVIC

*Aleksandar Bošković is a Senior Research Associate at the Institute of Social Sciences in Belgrade (Serbia & Montenegro) and Senior Lecturer in Anthropology at Rhodes University (Grahamstown, South Africa). His email is a.boškovic@ru.ac.za.*

*Fig. 1. Former Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito (1892-1980) with his wife Jovanka, visiting Ethiopia and his lifelong friend Emperor Haile Selassie (1892-1975).*

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1. There is some ambivalence on this in Slovenia: while politicians fiercely reject any connection with the region, business people are happy to be included. When I was lecturing at the Faculty of Social Sciences (FDV) in Ljubljana in 2002, first-year students seem to have accepted the latter position. Some countries, like Romania, would prefer not to be regarded as part of the region – although pretty much everybody in the world regards them as belonging there. Finally, the recent edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica* does include Slovenia in the Balkans, but excludes Greece. For further discussion see Todorova 1997 and Karakasiđou 2002.



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### Locating the subject

'The Balkans' acquired a particular allure for anthropologists and social scientists as the wars and destruction raged in Yugoslavia during the 1990s. The question of location is central here: what and where is 'the Balkans', who decides, and on what basis? Just as with other cases of geographic and social constructions, the answers to these questions are far from clear. For example, maps issued in different countries vary in whether they include the Republic of Slovenia as part of 'the Balkans'. In the US or France, for example, Slovenia is shown as part of the Balkans, but not in the UK or Germany.<sup>1</sup> The Croatians' view on this issue is also ambivalent (Rihtman-Auguštin 1998b, 1999). For the purpose of this discussion, all the countries that came into existence after the dissolution of Yugoslavia are considered part of 'the Balkans'.

As ethnologists/anthropologists have positioned themselves at the forefront of the 'nation-building' project in recent years, something needs to be said about the relationship of the Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian ethnolog-

ical traditions to former Yugoslavia. In the early 20th century both the Slovenian and the Croatian elites opted to join the Serbs in what was to become Yugoslavia after 1918 – a move which enjoyed much popular support. Many Croatian, Serbian and Slovenian scholars take the view that 'their nation' has been unjustifiably victimized in recent years, and have taken it upon themselves, as the chosen interpreters of the 'national culture', to set the record straight.

This paper examines evaluations of events between 1991 and 1999, highlighting the role of anthropologists (as well as social scientists in general) in the construction and consumption of such analyses. My choice of these three former Yugoslav republics is primarily based on the fact that they either had established ethnological traditions before the Second World War (Serbia, Croatia), or had seen intensive development of ethnology and 'would-be anthropology' in recent decades (Slovenia – cf. Godina 2002). Therefore, although excellent research has been, and continues to be conducted in other former regions of

Fig. 2. The relationship between the church and the Special Police Force (JSO) in Serbia was significant during the 1990s. Here a Special Police officer kisses the ring of a Serb Orthodox priest during the riots of 5 October 2000.

2. Defined by Marilyn Strathern in 1987, with intentional ambiguity, as 'anthropology carried out in the social context which produced it' (quoted in Rapport and Overing 2000: 18).

3. See Supek 1988, Slavec 1988.

4. For a detailed elaboration of the concept of 'Balkanization', see Bakic-Hayden and Hayden 1992 and Todorova 1997.

5. A good example for this kind of stereotyping is provided by Bougarel: 'For instance, the Sarajevoian [sic] architect Ivo Straus, in his book *Sarajevo: The architect and the barbarians*, describes the Serbian fighters besieging and shelling the town as "armed, toothless and ill-washed primitives," and considers that they are the representatives of a specific social category: the "hardly cultured newcomers." Of course, it is quite understandable that a direct victim of Serbian shelling would use such expressions. But it is nonetheless regrettable that some western commentators turned them into analytical categories' (Bougarel 1999: 157; footnote omitted).

6. Tomašić's work was also popular with Croatian nationalists during the Second World War and the quisling Independent State of Croatia (NDH, 1941-1945). However, he himself was in no way involved with the extreme nationalists during this period.

7. It is interesting that the renaming took 'cultural' anthropology to be the determining factor in the creation of the new (old) discipline. In several European countries (The Netherlands, for example), 'cultural anthropology' has an uneasy connection with the colonial past, while white Afrikaans-speaking South African anthropologists who supported the apartheid regime preferred to refer to themselves as 'cultural anthropologists'.

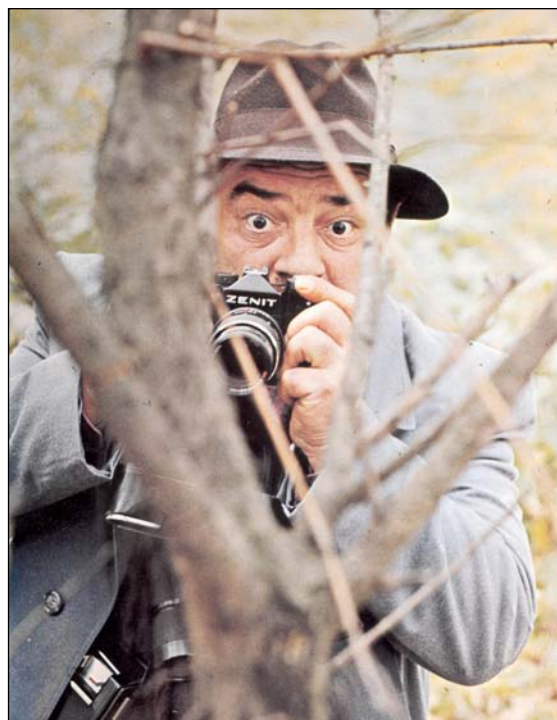
Fig. 3. The idea of the frightening and suspicious other has been explored by writers like Dusan Kovacevic. This is a still from his 1984 film *The Balkan spy*.

the country, such as Macedonia (by Brown, Danforth, Schwartz and others), Kosovo and Montenegro, the lack of 'indigenous' anthropological traditions led me to exclude them from this paper. The main focus here is on responses from 'native' anthropologists and ethnologists. Their perceptions of their own respective ethnic groups and the ways in which these ethnic groups have been perceived and discussed by 'outsiders', including non-native anthropologists, are also examined and placed in the context of more general attempts to reorganize the discipline in the region (cf. Nixon 1997).

This paper ultimately deals with issues arising from the concepts of 'auto-anthropology' or 'anthropology at home'.<sup>2</sup> The authors discussed below were, and are, all engaged in this process, and their experiences provide an interesting addendum to the growing interest in this topic – challenging its limits, methodologies and some key terms, and repositioning anthropologists as both participants and observers of some violent and traumatic events. My choice of the scholars is of course open to criticism, but I take them to be good representatives of the points of view I outline here, and hope that the discussion presented will permit a wider debate on native anthropology in the Balkans.

### The Serbian case

The Serbs have been vilified since the early 1990s, and associated with the beginning of the atrocities in the former Yugoslavia. This has resulted partly from the empirical fact of the so-called 'Yugoslav' army taking the Serbian side, and completely destroying many cities, towns and villages throughout Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, through what has become in effect a series of wars for the territorial expansion on the premise that 'all Serbs should live in one country'. But it is also due in part to the fact that the majority of the Serbian population consistently supported the nationalist policies of the former Serb, and Yugoslav, president, Slobodan Milošević, from 1987 until 2000. Some would argue, given the success of extreme nationalists in the recent Serbian elections, that in late 2004 there is still widespread support for such policies. On the other hand, in the wake of the NATO bombing campaign of 1999 many Serbs also identify themselves as victims, and this is not easily understood by outside observers.



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As the majority of the Serbian intellectuals also embraced the policies of Mr Milošević, they felt the need to confront what they felt were misrepresentations of their nation abroad (for an ethnological view of the events in Kosovo and the increased repression of Albanians after 1981, see Naumovic 1999). Of course, as Halpern and Hammel (1969) note, social scientists from former Yugoslavia, but ethnologists in particular, have always craved the acceptance and recognition of their own 'people' (*folk* or *narod* in Serbo-Croatian and Slovenian). They have also made extensive studies of 'the people' – in order to, among other things, contribute to the building of the 'nation'. This was promoted through the study of the 'national spirit' (*Volksgeist*), which found its peculiar expression in the analysis of specific psychological types ('characterology'), which became extremely popular especially in Serbia in the early 20th century (Cvijic 1918 and – abbreviated but without the overtly evolutionist tones – Stanoyevich 1919). What others (Croats) thought about this exercise is clear from the scathing criticism in Tomasić 1941. Serbs are not unique in this insistence on the importance of the study of *folk*, either within the Balkans (e.g. the Greeks, cf. Herzfeld 1995) or outside of the region (Germany, France). However, as Serb historians like Latinka Perovic have pointed out, in Serbia this formed the basis of the central line of reasoning which attempted to justify 'imperial' claims to other parts of the Balkans (Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia).

The same attitude was later employed in the assessment of various ethnic/national groups – with the aim of proving scientifically that a particular type of people, namely the Šumadija strain of the so-called 'Dinaric' type, was superior to all others. For Serbian ethnologists, this clearly demonstrated the superiority of the Serbian people over their South Slav (and other Yugoslav) compatriots and neighbours. This type of thinking resurfaced in the 1980s with the rising tide of Serbian nationalism, initially through various publications issued by and through the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA). Among the more memorable quotes from the early 1990s is a statement by the Serbian 'Father of the Nation', the well-known writer, member of the SASA and Yugoslav

Fig. 4. Nicknamed 'Danubius', this is one of the earliest monumental Neolithic sculptures from the Lepenski Vir culture, ca. 5500 BCE – a source of pride for the Serbian archaeologists who discovered it.

- Bakic-Hayden, M., & Hayden, R.M. 1992. Orientalist variations on the theme 'Balkans': Symbolic geography in recent Yugoslav cultural politics. *Slavic Review*, 51(1): 1-15.
- Baskar, B. 1999. Anthropologists facing the collapse of Yugoslavia. *Diogenes* 188, 47(4): 51-63.
- Bauman, Z. 1998. Hereditary victimhood: The Holocaust's life as a ghost. *Tikkun* 13(4): 33-38.
- Bougarel, X. 1999. Yugoslav wars: The 'Revenge of the Countryside' between sociological reality and nationalist myth. *East European Quarterly* 33(2): 157-175.
- Bowman, G. 1997. Identifying versus identifying with 'the Other'. In: James, A. et al. (eds) *After Writing Culture: Epistemology and praxis in contemporary anthropology*, pp. 34-50. London: Routledge.
- Brumen, B. 1997. Cambio en los conceptos de tiempo y espacio de los pueblos eslovenos a causa de la nueva frontera estatal. *Política y Sociedad* 25: 77-86.

Fig. 5. 'The Father of the (Serbian) Nation', Dobrica Cosic, speaking in 1968.



president 1992/1993, Dobrica Cosic, who said that the Serbs should use their 'comparative backwardness' to their advantage!

In popular discourse, this ascription of psychological characteristics to entire nations culminated in the wars of the 1990s, and leading Serbian ethnologist Ivan Colovic presented a particularly perceptive analysis of such views, especially among football supporters (Colovic 1995a, 2002). Colovic was, and still is, part of a small circle of consistently anti-nationalist intellectuals in Serbia, and as such his views were never very popular – the more so because he also challenged another popular icon of the nationalist tradition, the Serbian peasant.

The elevation of the figure of the peasant to iconic status goes back to Tihomir Dordevic (1868-1944), one of the founding fathers of Serbian ethnology. In his major ethno-historical study of Serbia between 1815 and 1839, Dordevic stressed the purity and the 'nobility' of the peasant character. It was in villages, and not in towns or cities, that the 'true' nature of the Serbian tradition could be encountered (see Colovic 1995b, 2002). This was contrasted with the 'corrupted' lifeways of the city dwellers and the fact that they so readily adopted elements of foreign cultures.

Dordevic's two-volume study was published in 1924, when Dordevic was already Professor of Ethnology at the University of Belgrade, having been appointed the first Lecturer in Ethnology there in 1906. The study was published after Cvijic's groundbreaking work, and it is also firmly situated in a period where most Serbian intellectuals were trying to establish understanding for 'the Serb cause' within former Yugoslavia, when the country was still known as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

This way of thinking remained at the core of Serbian ethnology, with its insistence on intensive study of small-scale rural communities and exclusive focus on 'what our people (*naš narod*) say'. The insistence on studying one's own ethnic group (*folk*) also remained at the core of the ethnological traditions in Croatia and Slovenia (as well as other parts of Yugoslavia), in the vein of the concept of *Volkskunde* in Germany.<sup>3</sup>

Attempts to reach deeper into the 'soul of the people' via the peasants have more recently been put forward by arguably the most talented of the newer generation of Serbian ethnologists, Slobodan Naumovic (see, for example, Naumovic 1995, but also 1999). Naumovic has also been a vocal critic of Colovic and other authors critical of 'traditional culture' and nationalism (2002). One of the key points of his critique is his insistence that the 'anti-nationalists', also termed the 'Other Serbia', have employed some 'orientalizing' or 'Balkanizing' strategies



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against their ideological opponents (Naumovic 2002: 26).<sup>4</sup> While highlighting some real problems (such as the stereotypical presentations of Serbs as bloodthirsty barbarians),<sup>5</sup> this line of criticism and questioning of stereotypes also provided a much-needed relief for the defenders of 'the Serbian cause', for if some depictions are erroneous and biased *one should not believe any of them*.

In this line of reasoning cultural relativism as a method is taken to an extreme – from insisting that it is necessary also to examine other nationalisms, not just that of the Serbs (a very valid point made by Vujacic 2003, among others) – to maintaining that the bloody dissolution of Yugoslavia was actually nobody's fault and that, for example, the Bosnian Muslims could simply have prevented all the atrocities against them if they had just surrendered or moved elsewhere. In arguing in this manner, many Serb ethnologists take literally some of the concepts associated with the *Writing Culture* approach – insisting on the relativity of knowledge, relativity of facts, and going as far as to state that 'facticity' does not even matter.

This line of reasoning also fosters the belief among many in Serbia that they have been unjustifiably singled out in a war that was, essentially, everybody's fault. Here is where the idea of *Balkanization* comes in handy: since 'the West' has *Balkanized* (or *orientalized*) the Serbs, it is only the Serbs who can understand the Serbs. Criticism from outside observers like van der Port is rendered completely irrelevant and methodologically incorrect – as the outsiders are not Serbs, there is no point even discussing whether their comments have any merits.

### The Croatian case

The situation in Croatia is in some respects more complex, as the Croats have been perceived as both victims (of the Serb aggression in 1991) and perpetrators (in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1993, as well in actions against the Serb civilians in Croatia in 1995). Unlike the Serb appropriation of victimhood, this ambiguity has always been present among both Croats and outside observers. It has created some problems for the Western media: for example, in early May 1993 the anchorman of the CBS evening news referred to the horrific events in the Bosnian village of Ahmici as 'Serb atrocities' – even though British troops in the vicinity had immediately made it known that Croatian forces were the perpetrators in this case. The image of innocent victims was so pervasive that it was difficult to imagine that the 'good guys' were also capable of committing horrendous war crimes.

The notion of victimhood was quite concrete in Croatia, especially during 1991. Ethnologists tried to make sense of what had happened and how it affected the areas where

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Fig. 6. A mosaic from the ancient Roman ritual centre of Gamzigrad, south Serbia (3rd and 4th centuries CE).



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- 1998. Grenzen, lokale Identitäten und interkulturelle Kommunikation im istrianischen Dorf Sv. Peter. In: Giordano, C. et al. (eds), *Interkulturelle Kommunikation im Nationalstaat*, pp. 183-205. München: Waxmann.
- Colovic, I. 1995a. Mythical Serbia, with commentary. Translated by I. Dordevic. *Erewhon* 3: 49-55.
- 1995b. Selo i grad u delu Tihomira Dordevica. [The village and the city in the work of Tihomir Dordevic.] *Bulletin of the Ethnographic Institute SASA* 44: 23-30.
- 2002 [1997] *The politics of symbol in Serbia*. London: Hurst.
- Culibrk, S. 1971. Cvijic's sociological research into society in the Balkans. *British Journal of Sociology* 22(4): 423-440.
- Cvijic, J. 1918. *La péninsule balkanique: Géographie humaine*. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Dordevic, T. 1906. O etnologiji [On ethnology]. First lecture in ethnology at the University of Belgrade, 18 September 1906. *Srpski kraljevski glasnik* 17(7): 520-532.
- Godina, V.V. 1998. The outbreak of nationalism on former Yugoslav territory. *Nations and Nationalism* 4(3): 409-422.
- 2002. From ethnology to anthropology and back again. In: P. Skalnik (ed.), *A post-communist millennium*, pp. 1-22. Prague: Set Out.
- Greverus, I.-M. 2002. Abroad and at home. In: Baskar, B. & Weber, I. (eds.) *MESS – Mediterranean Ethnological Summer School* Vol. 4, pp. 35-48. Ljubljana: Zupanjeva knjiznica.
- Halpern, J.M. and Hammel, E.A. 1969. Observations on the intellectual history of ethnology and other social sciences in Yugoslavia. *Comparative Study in Society and History* 11(1): 17-26.

Fig. 7. A portrait of Jovan Cvijic (1865-1927), one of the most important Serbian and Yugoslav intellectuals of the early 20th century, and the author of the monograph *Balkan Peninsula* (Paris, 1918).

they did research – if they could still get there, as almost one third of Croatia's territory was occupied until August 1995. At the same time, as large numbers of Croats had suddenly become refugees after being expelled from their homes by Serb forces in 1991, a new field of study had been created along with a very specific problem: how to position oneself within the context of what had just taken place?

These and similar questions came to the fore following the International Conference on War and Exile, held in Zagreb in 1995, the papers from which were published in 1996 (Jambrešić Kirin and Povrzanović 1996).

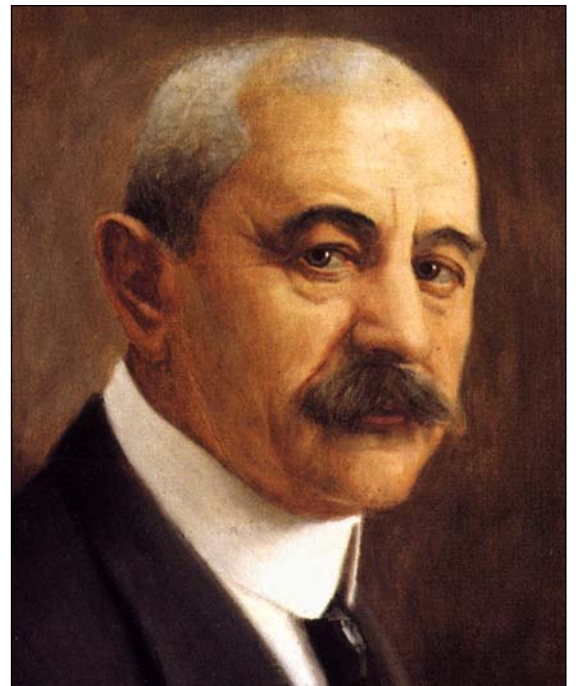
According to one of the participants, Glenn Bowman, the conference included a tour of some refugee camps in Croatia:

[...] in a conference (organized by the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research) receiving support from the Croatian state we were taken to a refugee camp and given a Potemkin village tour which suggested how well the refugees from Bosnia were being treated and how enthusiastically they were welcomed into the 'homeland' community. I broke away from the tour and interviewed people, discovering mass discrepancies in how refugees from Vukovar and 'real Croatia' and refugees from Bosnia (ethnic Croats and Bosniaks alike) were treated (different housing, lavish support for the former, etc). I also found that the camp people were sealed off from the town, unable to go to local schools, use libraries, etc. They also were given very poor food with no meat. While I was discovering this the Potemkin tour was being fed chicken – 'this is our everyday food, but we give it to you as our guests' – being told how good the local schools were and how friendly the 'neighbours' were. When I got back and told the conference people this I was greeted with silence by the organizers. I hence withdrew my paper because I didn't want it used for propaganda. (Bowman 2004, personal communication)

In a paper that was supposed to clarify the positions and the writings of Croatian 'war ethnographers', Povrzanović (2000) attempted to put things in context, insisting on the peculiar position in which Croat ethnographers found themselves in the early 1990s. She dismissed the criticism

of 'foreigners' (Ina-Maria Greverus and Glenn Bowman are particularly singled out) for not understanding the Croatian reality. What she (and, according to her, many of her colleagues too) objected to were, among other things, questions related to Croatian ethnologists' views on the plight of the Serb population of Croatia (most of whom had been expelled from their homes by early August 1995). In her view this presented an attempt to 'orientalize' Croatian ethnologists, together with the results of their research (Povrzanović 2000). There is an interesting analogy here with Serb authors who view 'tradition' with approval, as both groups see themselves as essentially misunderstood by their 'foreign' colleagues.

Another important analogy is that Croatia also had a



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Fig. 8. An estimated 150,000 people followed the funeral procession for Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić on 15 March 2003. He was assassinated by members of the Serbian Special Police unit.



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Herzfeld, M. 1995. Les enjeux du sang: La production officielle des stéréotypes dans les Balkans – le cas de la Grèce. *Anthropologie et Sociétés* 19(3): 37-51.

Jambrešić Kirin, R., and Povržanović, M. (eds) 1996. *War, exile, everyday life: Cultural perspectives*. Zagreb: Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research.

Karakasidou, A. 2002. The burden of the Balkans. *Anthropological Quarterly* 75(3): 575-589.

Kuzio, T. 2002. The myth of the civic state: A critical survey of Hans Kohn's framework for understanding nationalism. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 25(1): 20-39.

Muršić, R. 2000. The Yugoslav dark side of humanity: A view from a Slovene blind spot. In: Halpern, J.M. & Kideckel, D.A. (eds) *Neighbors at war: Anthropological perspectives on Yugoslav ethnicity, culture, and history*, pp. 56-77. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

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Nixon, P.J. 1997. Ideology in Balkan anthropological research. *Anthropology Today* 13(2): 17-18.

period of glorification of the 'Croatian peasant' – instituted by Dinko Tomašić (1902-1975), one of the founders of Croatian ethnology. In an article first published in 1936, Tomašić drew a distinction between 'tribal culture', characteristic of the mountain populations of the region, mostly Serbs and Montenegrins, and the 'co-operative culture' of the peoples of the plains, mostly Croats. The first was characterized by violence and aggression, while the second was more inclined towards co-operation and peaceful coexistence (Bougarel 1999). Just as the 'cult of the peasant' resurfaces as part of the 'happening of the people' (*dogadanje naroda*, orchestrated and brilliantly co-ordinated mass events that helped Milošević seize power in 1987-88), some Croatian social scientists rediscovered Tomašić's distinction between these two types of 'cultures' in the early 1990s (Bougarel 1999).<sup>6</sup> Here the distinction was used to explain the differences between the 'barbaric' Serbs and the 'civilized' Croats.

I should also point out here that although on the surface the image of the peasant as an ideal representative of both Croatian and Serbian culture was carefully cultivated, there was no real sense of a simultaneous, paradoxical view of peasants as 'backward' or 'primitive'. While the word for 'peasant' can be used in a derogatory sense in Serbo-Croatian, this usage is, and was, always restricted to certain (mostly well-educated and middle-class) segments of the urban population.

It is worth pointing out that some perceptions of similar 'cultural differences' did make it into West European political circles. For example, in 1991 the European Community commissioned French lawyer Robert Badinter to establish which of the states of the former Yugoslavia conformed to European Community (EC) standards, in order to determine whether they could be recognized by the Community. Badinter's commission concluded that Macedonia and Slovenia met these criteria. As a result, the EC decided to officially recognize *Croatia* and *Slovenia*.

### The Slovenian case

The Slovenians were in a much better position than the other two nations, as the war in Slovenia was a relatively brief affair, and they were spared the mass destruction that occurred in other parts of former Yugoslavia. However, the 'clash of cultures' type of thinking was (and is) part of

the Slovenian experience, as the Slovenes were regarded by others, including Western observers but also fellow former Yugoslavs, as belonging to a 'more civilized' group of nations, and thus, not 'really' part of the Balkans. The sense that they did not belong to Yugoslavia became quite pronounced in the late 1980s, and probably influenced the political distancing of Slovenia from the concept and idea of 'the Balkans'. In the last decade, Slovenian ethnologists have produced a number of very interesting studies of changing local ethnic identities (see, for example, Brumen 1997, 1998). Godina (1998) analysed the problems of self-identification that led to the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Baskar (1999) dealt in some detail with the issue of how anthropologists have interpreted the wars in Yugoslavia, while Muršić (2000) related the narrative of destruction and dissolution of the former country to his personal experiences.

Slovenian ethnologists were, and still are, in a paradoxical position as they are both 'within' and 'outside' the Balkans. It is impossible to ignore the existence of the country within which Slovenians were granted full national recognition and rights for the first time in their history. Within former Yugoslavia, a distinctive 'Slovenian identity' was recognized – for example, household products 'made in Slovenia' were regarded as superior to all others. On the other hand, the writings of Slovenian ethnologists/anthropologists throughout the 1990s are marked by an insistence on creating the image of Slovenia as 'something else', very different from 'the Balkans' – almost as if the years between 1918 and 1991 were some easily forgettable historical glitch.

Muršić (2000) wrote about the particular situation in which he (as a Slovenian) found himself on the break-up of Yugoslavia. Although vague on some details (no mention of the fact that both the Slovenian and the Croatian élites were keen to join the Serbs in the common South Slav state), Muršić does tend to essentialize somewhat – writing, for example, of '[t]he choice against Belgrade in December 1990' (ibid.: 66), rather than referring to the opposition to Serb nationalist policies. In his discussion of nationalism, nation and ethnicity, Muršić tends to opt for what is sometimes called 'liberal' nationalism, or what one Croatian sociologist has called 'cultural nationalism' (Pusić 1995).

Fig. 9. Front page of the banned weekly *Student* from 29 April 1987, which prompted infighting within the Serbian Communist Party, resulting in Slobodan Milošević gaining absolute power in Serbia by December 1987.

Povrzanovic, M. 2000. The imposed and the imagined as encountered by Croatian war ethnographers. *Current Anthropology* 41(2): 151-162.

Pusic, V. 1995. Uses of nationalism and the politics of recognition. *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures* 4(1): 43-61.

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Stanoyevich, M.S. 1919. The ethnography of the Yugo-Slavs. *Geographical Review* 7(2): 91-97.

Supek, O. 1988. Ethnology in Croatia. *Ethnological Review* (Beograd) 23/24: 17-35.

Todorova, M. 1997. *Imagining the Balkans*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Tomasic, D. 1941. Sociology in Yugoslavia. *American Journal of Sociology* 47(1): 53-69.

van der Port, M. 1999. 'It takes a Serb to know a Serb': Uncovering the roots of obstinate otherness in Serbia. *Critique of Anthropology* 19(1): 7-30.

Vujacic, V. 2003. Why nationalist discourse really matters: Two studies of Serbian nationalism. *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans* 5(1): 91-97.

Here he is very close to his Croatian and Serbian colleagues, all of whom believe that a distinction can really be made between 'liberal' and 'chauvinistic' nationalisms. In my view such distinctions are false, as some recent analyses indicate (Kuzio 2002). Claims to 'moderate' nationalism remind me of a meeting between an American NGO representative and a group of Belgrade students' representatives in early 1997, where the students' delegates claimed that they were 'nationalists, but just a little bit'. The NGO representative laughed and replied: 'You cannot be "just a little bit" nationalist. It would be like a woman claiming that she was "pregnant, but just a little bit".'

On the other hand, Muršić makes an important point about non-native anthropologists, in which he is less radical than Povrzanovic – mostly attempting to illustrate different points of view. Many non-native anthropologists tended to see the wars in former Yugoslavia as *bellum omnia contra omnes* (war by all against all) – essentially equating perpetrators and victims. This difference in perception(s) is the focus of Baskar (1999), who claims bias on the part of several American anthropologists who worked in Serbia, mentioning by name B. Denich, E. Hammel, R. Hayden and A. Simic (1999: 62n). But the more general issue of representation is interesting here: are anthropologists who disagree with the native's claims automatically wrong or biased? (For example, Joel M. Halpern, who has conducted fieldwork in Serbia for almost 50 years, is particularly evenhanded in his analysis, as Baskar would agree.)

#### Local anthropologies and global problems

As I pointed out above, all the regional ethnologies/anthropologies in former Yugoslavia and throughout the Balkans had their origins in the concept of *Volkskunde*. Even when other nations/cultures/tribes/ethnic groups were studied, they were analysed as something 'exotic', something different from 'us'. There was a hierarchy of cultures, with that of the ethnologist's own group perceived as superior to all the others. It is no accident that no research was done in the various parts of Yugoslavia by members of 'other' ethnic groups ('nations') from within the country: Croats studied the folklore of Croatia, Serbs that of Serbia, and Slovenians that of Slovenia. In a sense, these were ideal examples of 'anthropology at home', where 'the home' consisted of mostly rural places where the origins of the 'national tradition' (poetry, songs, dance, costume) were preserved. By studying them, ethnologists-turned-anthropologists were hoping to re-establish their connection with 'the people' (*folk*), and to contribute to the process of 'nation-building'. There were occasional exceptions (a Slovenian in India!), but they mostly simply confirm the rule. There are some indications that in Slovenia things might go in a different direction, with interesting new research being done both in neighbouring countries and in distant 'exotic' places such as Niger, Burkina Fasso, Japan and the US – but it is still too early to tell. Simply renaming departments of Ethnology as departments of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology is not enough.<sup>7</sup>

On the level of methodology, there are striking parallels in the use of the 'writing culture' approach in both Serbia and Croatia, and to a lesser extent in Slovenia, in an attempt to justify the idea that 'it takes one to know one', but also to exempt the defenders of the 'national cause' from any criticism (Bowman 1997).

The issue of anthropologists as 'other' is an important one, and many in this part of the world suddenly found themselves in this position. This was partly due to the sudden re-emergence of concepts of 'ethnicity' and 'nationalism' – concepts which were for many years considered a 'no-go' area for Yugoslav ethnologists. Hence



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the question raised by Rihtman-Augustin: 'How to approach the political bias which for about fifty years Croatian ethnology pretended to ignore?' (1996: 101). The situation in which Serbian and Croatian, and to a much lesser extent, Slovenian, ethnologists found themselves was a paradoxical one: on the one hand, they had suddenly become 'natives', 'privileged informants' who were supposed to share their insights about the barbarism perpetrated in the name of the emerging 'nations' and 'nation-states'. On the other, feeling themselves an integral part of the 'nation', many of them saw it as their duty to 'educate' foreigners about the *real* reasons for the death and destruction – and these always had to be 'on the other side'. While most people would have moved beyond the stereotypes proposed by Cvijic and his followers, the remnants of cultural and racial stereotypes are quite strong, as evidenced by the EC's failure to recognize Macedonia in 1991, for example. Efforts to problematize and critically discuss different discourses are still quite rare – notable exceptions are Rihtman-Augustin 1998a and Naumovic 2002 – but it is interesting to find that 'native' ethnologists/anthropologists from this part of the world are frequently offended by outsiders' lack of understanding (Povrzanovic 2000). This easily slides into a feeling of perpetual victimization or 'hereditary victimhood', to use Bauman's (1988) wonderful and very appropriate phrase, the feeling that just as no one wants to understand 'us' as anthropologists (and they should, for all the 'facts' are self-evident), similarly no one wants to understand our nations. This is bound to further the sense of isolation, with many practical consequences – and while I admire the call for dialogue made by scholars like Greverus (2002), until the dialogue about the years 1991-1999 takes place among former Yugoslav colleagues, many issues will remain unresolved.

Until that time, the future of ethnologies/anthropologies in the region will remain in the limbo of an irresolvable paradox, between being representative of one's own proud and unique 'nation', and being considered part of the global (trans-national) anthropological community. How tenable this position is remains to be seen. ●