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Political Psychology in Yugoslavia: An Overview

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Title: Political Psychology in Yugoslavia: An Overview

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Abstract. This article (with minimal editing by IBPP) has been written by a new IBPP Regional Editor, Natasa Bajic, a psychologist who resides in Serbia. In the article, she provides an overview of political psychology within Yugoslavia. She may be reached at Nbajic@yahoo.com.

Briefly, it (political psychology) does not exist. To be more precise, it is yet to be developed as a discipline of its own in psychology or political science departments or as a theoretical and practical field of scientific engagement in Yugoslavia.

Issues pertaining to political psychology are strongly present in the Serbian and Montenegrin cultures and everyday life as a daily subject of analysis for most of the population. Therefore, it is hard to find another reason other than censoring or self-censoring for there being practically no field or discipline of political psychology in Yugoslavia. This is because there can hardly be found a more fruitful ground for political psychology analysis than the Balkans and Serbia in the past 15 years.

The rise and fall of Milosheвич and his family, the dissolution of Yugoslavia, wars and ethnic conflicts, sanctions and economic disaster, significant inflation, corruption and criminality, refugees, the brain drain, etc., are just some of the major markers of political causes and effects that have had a great impact in realizing a great need to develop political psychology as a strong and recognized discipline in Yugoslavia. Although there were attempts from a number of colleagues to deal with specific issues mainly from social psychology--e.g., national stereotypes--broader studies were never carried out or published.

At the present moment Milosheвич's trial and the question of his deportation to The Hague; elections in Montenegro and the question of further dissolution of Yugoslavia; and armed conflicts in South Serbia, Kosovo and Macedonia urge us to put a close eye on the schools of thought present in the Yugoslavian public life. (1) A strong one is aiming to blame Milosheвич for everything that went wrong since 1987, including his political rise--augmenting such claims with his pathology, paranoid and opportunistic personality, and will for power at any cost. (2) Another one seeks to determine individual responsibility, to put those responsible on trial on the one hand, to establish committees for truth and reconciliation on the other hand, and to bare to the public in Yugoslavia the terrible crimes done in the name of their national interests. (3) An old one is still seeing a world conspiracy against the Serbs or at least American determination to destroy Serbia and rule the world. It seems that after October 5, 2000 and the fall of Milosheвич, this school of thought does not have as strong support as before.

Another more interesting political and psychological moment in Yugoslavia is the 18-member party coalition in power--still with the name Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS). Six months after elections, consensus on the new name still is far from being reached. (See Biro, M., & Selakovic-Bursic, S. (1996). Suicide, aggression and war. *Archives of Suicide Research*, 2, 75-79; Dekleva, K. B., & Post, J. M. (1997). Genocide in Bosnia: The case of Dr. Radovan Karadzic. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry & the Law*, 25, 485-496; Sending messages: The fate of Slobodan Milosevic. (October 20, 2000). *IBPP*, 9(14); Soeters, J.L. (1996). Culture and conflict: An application of Hofstede's theory to the

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conflict in the former Yugoslavia. *Peace & Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 2, 233-244; The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and its 2,000-member multinational force: Doing Milosevic's dirty work. (November 13, 1998). *IBPP*, 5(20); White, R.K. (2000). Psychological aspects of the Kosova crisis. *Peace & Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 6, 49-55.) (Keywords: Bajic, Serbia, Yugoslavia.)