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Nationalism and Transitions: Mobilizing for Democracy in Yugoslavia

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Mobilizing for Democracy: Democratization Processes and the Mobilization of Civil Society

The project addresses the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in democratization processes, bridging social science approaches to social movements and democracy. The project starts by revisiting the “transitology” approach to democratization and the political process approach to social movements, before moving towards more innovative approaches in both areas. From the theoretical point of view, a main innovation will be in addressing both structural preconditions as well as actors’ strategies, looking at the intersection of structure and agency. In an historical and comparative perspective, I aim to develop a description and an understanding of the conditions and effects of the participation of civil society organizations in the various stages of democratization processes. Different parts of the research will address different sub-questions linked to the broad question of CSOs’ participation in democratization processes: a) under which (external and internal) conditions and through which mechanisms do CSOs support democratization processes? b) Under which conditions and through which mechanisms do they play an important role in democratization processes? c) Under which conditions and through which mechanisms are they successful in triggering democratization processes? d) And, finally, what is the legacy of the participation of civil society during transitions to democracy on the quality of democracy during consolidation? The main empirical focus will be on recent democratization processes in EU member and associated states. The comparative research design will, however, also include selected comparisons with oppositional social movements in authoritarian regimes as well as democratization processes in other historical times and geopolitical regions. From an empirical point of view, a main innovation will lie in the development of mixed method strategies, combining large N and small N analyses, and qualitative comparative analysis with in-depth, structured narratives.

Nationalism and Transitions: Mobilizing for Democracy in Yugoslavia

Daniel P. Ritter

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Abstract: The Yugoslav transition(s) to democracy is perhaps the most complex of all the Eastern European cases. It can be argued that Yugoslavia enjoyed the most favorable initial conditions of any country in the region: the regime was relatively liberal, there was an indigenous, vibrant civil society, an economic crisis had put politicians on the defensive, and the country was not overly tied to either Western or Eastern influence. Had these structural conditions been the full story, Yugoslavia might have been able to dissolve without the most violent war Europe has experienced since 1945. However, one major factor came to trump all others: nationalism. The history of Yugoslavia's fall cannot be told without attention to ethnic rivalries. Since the country was a federation consisting of six republics and two autonomous provinces imposed on its citizens by the communists that came to power after World War II, only communism could hold the federation together. Once that (discredited) ideological glue was removed, Yugoslavia collapsed on itself.

Key words: Democratization; Transition; Yugoslavia; Civil society; Nationalism

The level of parallel mobilization of ordinary people in Yugoslavia, namely of industrial workers and Kosovo Serbs, various groups during the antibureaucratic revolution and Kosovo Albanians, surpassed those in most other East European states, if judged by the numbers of participants, the variety of groups involved and the temporal and geographical extension of mobilization. Popular protests ranged from small and orderly events to large and highly disruptive protest marches and demonstrations, which led to considerable changes in the personal composition and policies of Yugoslavia's political elites, as well as in the structure and operation of the authoritarian regime. However, the images of this wave of mobilization that dominate published accounts sharply contrast with those of the people power associated with political struggles in other East European states, and sketch authoritarian, even totalitarian mobilization, and the dark forces of nationalism. (Vladislavljević 2008: 2)

The Yugoslav transition to democracy is perhaps the most complex of all the Eastern European cases. As the opening quote suggests, the country's democratization process is puzzling for several reasons. First, it can be argued

that Yugoslavia enjoyed the most favorable initial conditions of any country in the region: the regime was relatively liberal, there was an indigenous, vibrant civil society in place, an economic crisis had put politicians on the defensive, and the country was not overly tied to either Western or Eastern influence. Had these structural conditions told the full story, Yugoslavia might have been able to dissolve without the most violent and heinous conflict Europe had experienced since World War II. However, one major factor came to trump all others: nationalism. The history of Yugoslavia cannot be told without attention to ethnic rivalries. Since the country was a federation consisting of six republics and two autonomous provinces, imposed on its citizens by the communists that came to power after World War II, only communism could hold the federation together.¹ As we will see, once that (discredited) ideological glue was removed, Yugoslavia collapsed on itself.

In Yugoslavia, nationalism, which did not correspond perfectly to the various republics, trumped all other issues, including democratization. Unlike some of the other federal states in Eastern Europe, such as Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, Valerie Bunce (1999) has pointed out that the federal center of Yugoslavia was inherently weak, consisting in the final diagnosis of little more than the Yugoslav National Army (JNA). While officially a federation, Bunce goes as far as to call Yugoslavia a “confederation” because unlike the Czechoslovak and Soviet “actual” federations, which were “characterized by the existence of shared power based on territorial-administrative divisions”, Yugoslavia was characterized by “the domination of the republics over the center” (1999: 111). Despite his best efforts, Tito had only managed to bring the six republics together by allowing each state significant autonomy in a highly decentralized federal structure. For example, each republic was, following the USSR’s invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, allowed its own territorial defense force, and the Yugoslav market, including its banking system, was segmented along republican lines (Bunce 1999: 111). Furthermore, it can be argued that Tito’s break with Stalin in 1948 absolved republican leaders of the overpowering presence of Moscow, and that regional politicians therefore felt less bound to the policies of the federal center, especially after the death of Tito in 1980.

A final important point is that some of the constituent republics were historical enemies. In particular, there was little love lost between the Catholic Croats and the Orthodox Serbs. For example, during World War II Croatian fascists, the Utasha, fought with the Axis powers, and, importantly, against the

¹ Yugoslavia as a concept existed before World War II as a monarchy known as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (previously the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes). It was established in 1918 following the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in a moment of intense nationalism.

Serbian Chetniks. After the war, Tito's solution to the lasting animosities and horrendous collective memories was to forbid any discussion on the topic. While in the short run this allowed Yugoslavia to unite under a socialist banner, when the communist glue began to lose its adhesive qualities little could prevent ingrained nationalist grievances from rising to the surface. In this explosive context, it is perhaps little wonder that democratization and other political concerns took a backseat to more primordial preoccupations, such as ethnic survival and revenge. After all, who cares about whether or not one's leader is a tyrant if one's neighbors are the "real" enemy. In short, Yugoslavia's historical record had to be resolved before democratization could commence. As we will see, different republics found different ways of settling that record.

Periodization

The periodization of the Yugoslav democratization process is a complex matter for several reasons. First, and most obviously, the Yugoslavia that began to liberalize during the 1980s no longer existed by the time its successor states became democracies, which means that the democratization process has to be considered across a number of national contexts. In Slovenia, the situation resembled that of Hungary and resulted in a quick transition to democracy. In Croatia and Serbia, the transitions took longer and involved Western support for opposition groups. Croatia left authoritarianism behind through an orderly election in 2000 while Serbia (at the time still called Yugoslavia and united with Montenegro) experienced the first "color revolution" of the 2000s when hundreds of thousands protested Slobodan Milošević's attempt to steal the presidential election. In the remaining former republics, (The Former Yugoslav Republic of) Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, ethnic divisions and lagging economic development have resulted in a much slower path to democracy. Although scholars considered Macedonia democratized by the end of the century's first decade, Bosnia and Herzegovina is stuck in a transition limbo due to a highly complex compromise that was struck in order to end the war in that country. Scholars have suggested that Slovenia democratized within two years of the dissolution of Yugoslavia and held its first multi-party elections in 1990 (Boduszyński 2010: 119), whereas Croatia completed its transition in 2000 (Levitsky and Way 2010: 117), Serbia (and Montenegro) by late 2003/early 2004 (Levitsky and Way 2010: 109-13), and Macedonia in the late 2000s (Levitsky and Way 2010: 124). Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had to go through a "painstakingly sluggish" process, had still not democratized by 2007 (Vasilevski 2007: 10).

Second, as I will show in this report, Yugoslavia is a very different beast compared to its Eastern European neighbors. In contrast to the Soviet satellite states, Yugoslavia was a relatively liberal country with good relations with the West. By the mid-1980s, the country resembled Hungary in the sense that the communist elites in the various republics had begun to lose faith in the communist ideology that constituted the only glue holding the fragile federation together. Consequently, its citizens could for the most part travel freely and opposition groups enjoyed considerable freedom to voice their opinions, so long as they stayed away from overtly political issues.

The political context makes it difficult to establish when democratization began, simply because Yugoslavia was less autocratic to begin with. The various republics enjoyed substantial autonomy from the federal government, which under Josip Broz Tito only retained tight control over economic and military issues. Nonetheless, one could use either the establishment of the 1974 Constitution (which further decentralized Yugoslavia and thus began the process of fragmentation) or Tito's death in 1980 as the starting point of the democratization process. As noted above, there is no single Yugoslav point of consolidation, but rather five different ones. At least one state, Bosnia and Herzegovina, is not considered to have completed the transition to democracy.

To further emphasize the complex nature of the Yugoslav transition, one scholar points out that on "the eve of the 1989 revolutions in eastern and central Europe, Yugoslavia was better poised than any other socialist country to make a successful transition to a market economy and the west" (Woodward 1995: 1). Still, Yugoslavia took longer to complete the process and was the only country in the region to go through a civil war. As Stokes (1993) points out,

Yugoslavia had neither a velvet revolution nor a velvet divorce. Midway through 1991 two of its six constituent republics, Slovenia and Croatia, declared their independence, provoking a vicious civil war that spread in 1992 to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ethnic emotions run deep throughout Eastern Europe, but nowhere did they reach the level of bestiality as they did in Yugoslavia. ... What happened? How did Yugoslavia, the first Communist state to break with the Soviet Union and the most open Communist state in the world in the 1960s, come to this depressing impasse? (218)

The answer, I suggest, is that unlike other Eastern European states, democratization became secondary to other concerns, such as nationalism, partly because the lack of democracy was considered less of a problem here than elsewhere. Nationalism was indeed a factor in some of the other Eastern European transitions, such as those of Czechoslovakia and the GDR, but

nowhere else did it have such devastating consequences as it did in Yugoslavia, nor did it derail those countries' democratization efforts (see above). Ironically then, Yugoslavia's advantageous starting point, seen from a democratization perspective, turned out to be a great disadvantage when republican political leaders sought to save their positions of power by exploiting nationalist concerns and rhetoric.

Structural Conditions

The structural conditions surrounding Yugoslavia's transition are, like the issue of periodization, complex. In order to understand the context in which the country dissolved in the early 1990s and was overtaken by severe ethnic conflicts, it is necessary to have some grounding in the history of Yugoslavia. Unlike most of the Eastern European countries that emerged after World War II, the creation of Yugoslavia as a communist state was not the result of Soviet intervention. Rather, it was the logical outcome of the mass armed struggle waged by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) during the war against regional fascist forces that supported the Axis. The communists, led by Tito, were able to assert control over what was known at the time as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and by 1945 they had succeeded in eliminating the existing multi-party system. In January of 1946 King Peter II was removed from power while in exile and the country introduced a new constitution under its new name — the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Composed of six republics (Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro) and two autonomous provinces (Vojvodina and Kosova, both belonging to Serbia), the new territorial entity gave significant freedoms to the various republics in a decentralized system that would become even more decentralized following the adoption of the 1974 Constitution (Bunce 1999: 111; Gibianiski 2006: 18).

While initially aligned with Stalin's Soviet Union, the relationship between the two Communist states collapsed as early as 1948 after Moscow repeatedly accused Tito of not being strong enough in his support of the Soviet Union. The conflict revolved around Stalin's fear that Tito was trying to establish a Balkan version of the USSR that would constitute a rival communist center in Europe. However, the Soviet leader never punished Yugoslavia militarily as he dealt with East German, Hungarian, and Czechoslovakian dissent. Instead, Yugoslavia was allowed to simply sever relations with the USSR, relations that were later repaired and restored to normality when Yugoslavia joined the group of non-aligned states. Why did Stalin not try to bring the fellow communist state into the Soviet sphere? Following World War

II, Churchill and Stalin had agreed at Yalta that “Yugoslavia should be half within the Western sphere of influence and half within the Eastern sphere” (Licht 2000: 118). Invading obstinate Yugoslavia and bringing it within Soviet control would therefore come at a much higher price than the invasions carried out in other Eastern European states.

Yugoslavia’s strained relationship with the Soviet Union did however result in Western compensation as US and European governments began to provide Yugoslavia with economic aid in the late 1940s. As one commentator explains,

U.S. officials had been unwilling or reluctant to provide aid either to fascist or to communist dictatorships after the war, but as U.S.-Soviet conflict sharpened, U.S. officials reconsidered, and began providing aid to dictatorships on its side of the Cold War divide. After Yugoslavia broke with the Soviet Union in 1948, the U.S. government released frozen Yugoslav assets, including \$47 million in gold, and later provided Tito’s regime with loans, grants, and military aid in concert with aid from the World Bank and U.S. allies in Western Europe. Between 1951 and 1960, “the United States extended to Yugoslavia \$2.7 billion worth of military and economic assistance on a non-repayable basis,” somewhat more than it provided to regimes in Spain, Portugal and Greece in the same period. This influx of foreign aid promoted double-digit economic growth in Yugoslavia, as it did in Iberia and Greece, during the 1950s. Economic recovery and growth was also assisted by the normalization of Yugoslavia’s trade relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe after Khrushchev repaired Soviet relations with Tito in 1955. (Schaeffer 2000: 49)

Thanks to American aid, the Yugoslav economy grew rapidly in the 1950s and 1960s. The Yugoslav government had sought to develop its own brand of a socialist economic system that incorporated some aspects of the capitalist market system. For example, private businesses were allowed as long as they employed no more than four people. Still, the state ran all of the major businesses, albeit in a less centralized manner than elsewhere in Eastern Europe. The “self management” system meant that workers were in control of their factories and workplaces. In each factory, the workers elected their management through a “one worker, one vote” arrangement. For a while, this system benefited the country greatly, with the Yugoslav economy growing at a high rate and with low levels of unemployment. However, inefficient use of foreign aid meant that although workers received relatively high salaries in comparison to their Eastern European colleagues, the rate of economic growth slowed in the 1970s. The subsequent economic downturn was exacerbated by the global economic crisis that occurred at the same time, and when the second oil crisis hit

the world in 1979, just a year before Tito's death, "the Yugoslav miracle" was officially over (Stokes: 1993: 229). The reason the economic crisis hit the country only in the late 1970s was that, like other nations in the region and in Latin America, Yugoslavia had increased its borrowing from the West in order to compensate for lost revenues. As a result, between 1971 and 1975 the country's debt doubled from \$2.7 billion to \$5.8 billion, climbing to \$20.5 billion in 1981. Lenders now demanded that Yugoslav leaders make tough decisions, including the imposition of structural adjustment policies and various austerity programs (Schaeffer 2000: 51; Stokes 1993: 229-30). While this eventually helped Yugoslavia stabilize its economy, it came at a terrible political price as workers lost their jobs and prices rose. Before Ante Marković's (the country's last prime minister) unpopular policies began to pay off in 1990, the declining economic situation had already led to widespread discontent and workers' movements that demanded change (Stokes 1993: 238-41).

Yugoslavia's economic problems were not limited to its foreign debt. As a federation, the country consisted of economically diverse republics. The richest republics, Slovenia and Croatia, enjoyed relatively large influxes of foreign capital, thanks mainly to Western and Eastern tourism. While the republics had some autonomy in how to spend their own money, much of it was still redistributed across the federation. This meant that the richer states contributed disproportionately to the development of the less wealthy parts of Yugoslavia, such as Kosova and Macedonia. It was this issue that forced the introduction of a new constitution in 1974 and in some ways made way for the dissolution of the country. The new constitution further decentralized Yugoslavia in a somewhat desperate attempt by the federal elites to keep the federation intact. Unfortunately, none of the most important republics were content with the new constitution. Croatia and Slovenia felt that the decentralization efforts did not go far enough, while Serbia had hoped to prevent the fragmentation of the federal system in which they were the central power (Stokes 1993:228). However, in the end, all national elites were to benefit from the federal Yugoslav arrangements in the late 1980s.

"By the mid-1980s, the political and economic foundations of the Yugoslav system—a system commonly called "Titoism" – began to crumble. Nationalism festered in all the constituent republics" (Vasilevski 2007: 5). As mentioned above, all republics suffered economically, but thanks to the federal composition of the country no republican leader had to assume responsibility for the crisis. This was decidedly different from the rest of Eastern Europe where the state and the party were indivisible. Yugoslavia's complex arrangement included a federal communist league, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), and autonomous communist leagues in each of the republics. This meant

two things: first, the LCY had no meaningful constituency other than its army (JNA), and second, each republic's communist leaders could blame the federal center for the country's economic problems. Hence, when the economic crisis began to affect politics in the republics in a very real way in the mid-1980s, each republic's leadership blamed the other republics for their nation's economic misfortunes in an attempt to maintain power and legitimacy. Not only was this convenient for warding off economic criticism, it also resonated well with the burgeoning nationalist movements that were emerging throughout Yugoslavia, especially among Kosovo Serbs and Slovenes. Consequently, the economic crisis forced communist politicians to become nationalists, a move which could potentially save their positions of power but spelled disaster for the country at large. Evidence of how detrimental this turn of events was for the country is represented by the fact that although Marković's austerity policies largely repaired the Yugoslav economy and managed to persuade foreign investors to return to the country in 1990 and 1991, the republican leaderships largely refused to execute his economic policies. Rather than saving the economy by introducing unpopular reforms, communist leaders jumped on the nationalist bandwagon and condemned both the federal leadership and their greedy neighbors (Stokes 1993: 238-41). Furthermore, most communist leaders became socialists overnight and distanced themselves both from communist ideology and the single-party system.

A final structural condition should be mentioned, namely Yugoslavia's international context. Unlike most Eastern European socialist states, Yugoslavia enjoyed good relations with the West. In addition to relative economic prosperity, Western relations also seem to have had a liberalizing impact on Yugoslavia as a whole, especially in Slovenia and Serbia. In particular, "Slovenes, as close neighbors of Italy and Austria, had long considered themselves somewhat removed from the passions of Balkan politics" (Stokes 1993: 236). As we shall see later, one consequence of this proximity to Western Europe was that Slovenian dissidents enjoyed significant freedoms as early as the 1970s, and

when Tito died Slovenia boasted perhaps the most independently minded intelligentsia in Yugoslavia. By the mid-1980s its capital city Ljubljana could boast of an influential student press, a strong group of intellectuals surrounding the avant-garde journal *Nova revija* (New Review), and the first stirrings of alternative movements of feminists, gays, peace activists, and environmentalists. (Stokes 1993: 236)

In short, by the end of the 1980s Yugoslavia harbored two important preconditions for mass mobilization: a faltering economy and a relatively vibrant civil society.

Political Opportunities

Because of the faltering economy and the fact that a burgeoning civil society already existed in both Slovenia and Serbia in the early 1980s, Yugoslavia as a whole must be described as a state vulnerable to pressures from below. As such, it took little to further destabilize the federal structure of the country. Nonetheless, in 1980 the country experienced a destabilizing incident that would spell the end of the federation within just over a decade. The death of Tito on May 4th shocked a country that had grown accustomed to Tito's 35 years of leadership. As the population mourned, Tito's political heirs struggled to keep their leader's project viable. However, that was destined to be a difficult task because of the particularities of Yugoslav socialism. Whereas other Eastern European countries had accepted socialism as a political ideology, in Yugoslavia that acceptance was coupled with a nationalist ideology, namely that of the Yugoslav people. Historically, the different nations that made up the federation had considered themselves distinct from one another, and had often fought wars against each other. After World War II, Tito managed to put old grudges to rest by authoritatively imposing Yugoslav nationalism upon the country through the proxy of socialism and by forbidding debates about past crimes conducted in the names of nations. This meant that the two ideologies were intimately linked and maintained in large part by Tito himself (Stokes 1993). As Stokes (1993) explains,

the linkage of "Yugoslav" and "socialist" contained a critical weakness that Tito and his colleagues could never have imagined. As long as the Communist movement remained strong, Yugoslavism was not in danger. If nationalism reared its head the party could and did push it back under the surface. If the League of Communists of Yugoslavia should disintegrate, however, then the Yugoslavism it championed would disintegrate too. (223)

Unfortunately for the federal government, the death of Tito represented the beginning of the disintegration of the LCY, as the leader's death coincided with the emergence of a new generation of party leaders in the various republics. The generational shift resulted in the "pragmatic relaxation of repressive practices" (Vladislavljević 2008: 47) since the younger politicians were much less ready than their predecessors to clamp down on dissidents. Although the entire country

experienced an easing of government control, it was particularly salient in Serbia and Slovenia. In these two republics, the new generation of politicians “tolerated both cultural and political dissent and engaged in informal alliances with protest groups and dissident intellectuals in the second half of the 1980s” (Vladisavljević 2008: 48), which naturally emboldened activists and resulted in an invigorated civil society.

The main problem for the Yugoslav government was that political power had come to reside in Tito personally. Consequently, after his death no politician emerged who could fill his shoes. In office Tito had been able to manage republican divisions by decentralizing the federation and providing citizens with Western-style freedoms, knowing that his personal control over the army and his status as national hero would prevent republican leaders from opposing the system he had built. However, this “solution” experienced major systemic problems once Tito was gone. After his passing, Yugoslavia came to lack the stuff that had held the federation together for 35 years.

Due to the highly particular arrangement of Yugoslavia into a decentralized federation composed of former enemy nations, one might argue that the country’s succession crisis was the only political opportunity activists needed in order to act. It was not the fact that a dictator (albeit a popular and rather successful one) had died that mattered most, but rather that the only failsafe that prevented the federated nations from entering into conflict with one another had disappeared. From my readings the impression I gather is that Yugoslavia was always ready to explode and that only the presence of Tito prevented that from happening sooner. But even for Tito managing competing national interests was a difficult task, a task he solved by giving the republics considerable autonomy. In this manner he was able to maintain the bonds that held the country together, yet every time he strengthened the republics he weakened those bonds. As we shall see, post-Tito Yugoslavia was ripe for destruction as the economic crisis that coincided with the leader’s death exacerbated nationalist hostilities. Add to this the fact that Tito’s policies had already created the most open political environment for civil society mobilization in Eastern Europe and what we are left with is a context characterized by a weak state, a disastrous economy, a vibrant civil society, and long-standing ethnic hostilities. In short, there was no shortage of political opportunities in Yugoslavia. The only question became which group would exploit them. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the republics’ political elites were among those that tried to maximize their own standing in this context, and it is to them we now turn our attention.

Elites

Tito's death had a tremendous impact on all societal groups, including the federal and republican elites. However, the leader's passing affected these two groups in drastically different ways. While the federal leaders struggled against pent-up popular frustration with the economic performance of the country, republican elites enjoyed real independence for the first time in decades. Beginning in the 1980s, republican leaders exploited Yugoslavia's federal arrangement and sought to limit the power of the central leadership. One way this was done was via their unprecedented efforts to block economic and political reforms, and in December of 1987 the Federal Assembly failed to pass the budget for the following year for the first time in the country's history. In Tito's lifetime such heresy would have been inconceivable, but by the mid-1980s the old guard of Tito supporters was rapidly aging and replaced by younger career politicians unwedded to the ideological values and the historical legacy of the party, not personally linked to Tito, and who had no intention of relinquishing power because of economic mistakes made in the name of socialism (Vladisavljević 2008: 126). "By 1988 the great majority of Tito's chosen coterie of republics' leaders had been replaced with leaders who had no common loyalties" and "both the Yugoslav federation and the Yugoslav Communist party – the League of Communists – which nominally ruled the country had lost much of their legitimacy" (Pavković 2010: 76). In short, unlike their predecessors the new elites had little incentive to cooperate with one another. As a consequence,

Old and new divisions in the political class came to the fore, such as between promoters of greater control of Serbia's central government over its autonomous provinces and their foes; between advocates of a stronger federal centre and protectors of the status quo; between proponents of change in the party's Kosovo policy and their opponents; between conservative and liberally minded politicians; between members of various political generations; and between high- and low-ranking officials. Since the divisions often cut across one another and high officials engaged in complex political manoeuvring, relations within the political class became rather complicated. (Vladisavljević 2008: 126)

By the 1990s it became clear that political elites throughout the federation had abandoned Tito's approach and had started playing on nationalism as a way of saving their own power (Licht 2000: 113). Abandoning the old ideology was not a sufficient measure if one wanted to hold on to power. Strong currents were brewing throughout Yugoslavia, the strongest of which was nationalism. Shrewd (or desperate?) politicians in virtually all of the republics capitalized on what

was probably their last chance to cling to power and embraced populist nationalism. As we shall see in the following sections, the nationalist movement had been brewing since at least 1981, but it was the Kosovo Serb mobilization in the mid-1980s that was to play the most important role in the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

As mentioned previously, nationalism was in all the republican leaders' interests since it was the only way for them to avoid responsibility for Yugoslavia's economic demise. By blaming the federal government and the other republics, republican leaders hoped to save themselves (Licht 2000: 116-7). The most talented politician in this blame game was Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević. Milošević rose to power in Serbia precisely because of his support for the Serb minority in Kosova. Since 1985 (see below), Kosova Serbs had protested against what they perceived to be discrimination at the hands of Kosova's Albanian majority. Discontented with the Albanian leadership of Serbia's autonomous province, the Kosovo Serbs sought protection from the federal government and from Serbia itself. In what has been depicted as Milošević's crowning moment, the future dictator addressed a crowd of 15,000 Kosovo Serbs and Montenegrins in the night and early morning of April 24 and 25, 1987. While different accounts of the speech exist, Milošević is supposed to have told the crowd something along the following lines:

The first thing that I wish to tell you, comrades, is that you must remain here. This is your land, your houses are here, your fields and gardens, your memories. ... It was never characteristic of the spirit of the Serb and Montenegrin people to knuckle under to difficulties, to demobilize itself when it must fight, to become demoralized when the going is tough. You must remain here on account of your ancestors and descendants. Otherwise, we would be shaming the ancestors and disillusioning the descendants. (cit. in Banac 1992: 176-7)

In what can only be described as shrewd opportunism, Milošević was thus able to turn nationalist complaints against Serbia into political gain. From that point on he became the protector of all Serbs, and the most powerful politician in all of Yugoslavia. Once he had consolidated Serbian power, Milošević completed his renunciation of Tito's rule by permitting hitherto forbidden public criticism of the father of the nation. But contrary to what might have been expected, Milošević "permitted the denigration of Tito not because of Tito's dictatorial record but because Tito was a Croat and a federalist," and "put the party-state of Serbia, with its media, cultural and educational institutions, armed power and federal influence, and even the usually disloyal intelligentsia, in the service of Serbian national homogenization and supremacy" (Banac 1992: 178). In short,

Milošević unleashed the one social force he felt he could control, nationalism. Meanwhile, other more benign currents within civil society were quickly marginalized to make a way for the protection of Serbs throughout Yugoslavia.

Although Milošević was certainly the most radical nationalist leader to emerge in Yugoslavia in the 1980s he was far from being the only one. In Slovenia, the most liberal republic and where civil society had made the biggest inroads, socialist leaders abandoned socialism in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As fear of Milošević grew throughout Yugoslavia, and in Slovenia in particular, the Slovenian socialists exploited the situation by hijacking the nationalist agenda of the opposition and transforming itself into the Party of Democratic Renewal. “Under its new slogan ‘Europe now’ it presented itself as a national party of all Slovenes which was ready to find a place for Slovenia, as a fully sovereign state, within a new confederal Yugoslavia” (Pavković 2010: 110-11). While Slovenian opposition politicians complained (political plurality had already been approved in Slovenia) that the socialists were trespassing on their political ground, this development shows how nationalist concerns assumed vastly different shapes in the two republics. In the last section of this report I will discuss this discrepancy further.

Finally, in Croatia counter-elites, and in particular discredited former party members, came to dominate the nationalist movement. The reason for this was simple: the Croatian communists belonged to the anti-nationalist wing of the party that had been handed control of Croatia after Tito purged the nationalist communists who had pressed for increased autonomy and even threatened secession in 1971. This ordeal experienced in the 1970s meant that Croatia was a more repressive context for dissidents than Serbia and Slovenia, and the Party therefore tried its best to contain the Nationalists, headed by a former communist named Franjo Tuđman. However, threatened by Milošević’s nationalist rhetoric, the socialists, “in an attempt to widen their popular support ... found in late 1988 new tolerance for nationalist dissidents” (Pavković 2010: 112). By 1989, Tuđman had founded Croatia’s first opposition party, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), and after the socialist party had undergone a transformation similar to that of its Slovenian counterpart in the early months of 1990, HDZ came to power following Croatia’s first elections later that year (Pavković 2010: 113).

Civil Society

The Yugoslav transition differs quite substantially from other Eastern European cases where civil society is concerned for two main reasons. First, unlike elsewhere in the region, civil society was fairly strong in Yugoslavia. This state

of affairs was a consequence of Yugoslavia's maintaining good economic and political relations with the West, and thus being affected by its liberalism, and by the fact that federal decentralization resulted in a less repressive republican context, as noted especially in Serbia and Slovenia. Furthermore, Yugoslavia's more participatory political arrangements and its tradition of labor organizing created a social context in which civic associations were perceived to be less threatening than within the Soviet sphere.

Second, and rather counter-intuitively, the civil society groups that emerged more powerfully in Yugoslavia were not only those we might expect. Human rights and democratization groups had less impact here than in Czechoslovakia and East Germany for example. The same goes for peace and environmental groups. A possible explanation for this may be that simply by virtue of being allowed these liberal elements of civil society were less effective. Since freedom of expression was respected to a greater degree than elsewhere in Eastern Europe, calls for democracy and human rights were less salient to the population at large. Instead, the groups that were able to mobilize the largest number of protesters were nationalist and workers' groups, and, to a lesser extent, students. As this section will show, the relatively advantageous position of civil society in Yugoslavia failed to generate a pro-democracy challenge against the state – at both the federal and republican levels — and was quickly marginalized by workers and nationalists. This does not mean that other civil society groups were unimportant, they were not, but their relative weakness contributed to steering Yugoslavia in the direction of ethnic strife rather than democratization.

Yugoslav civil society, Vasilevski (2007) writes, “while stronger than in most other Eastern European states ... was comparatively less important than political and economic change from above” (17). While there is an element of truth to this statement, Vasilevski's argument is not completely accurate. It is true that change was accompanied by elite actions, but it was civil society movements that ultimately forced politicians to abandon the sinking Titoist ship. While civil society only entered national politics in full force in the 1980s, scholars have dated the beginning of civil society mobilization to the early 1960s, or at the very latest to 1966-68 when students occupied all buildings belonging to the university in Belgrade (Licht 2000: 119-20). As in other Eastern European countries, some of the earliest civil society mobilizations included calls for democratization and human rights.

The Democratization Movement

The early 1970s represented a fairly repressive time in the history of Yugoslavia. When Croatian communists began to speak of secession and were charged by their Serbian counterparts of wanting to destroy the federation, Tito responded with party purges. In the aftermath of these destabilizing events, the country witnessed several political trials with many of the defendants receiving prison sentences. By the mid-1970s, leading dissidents began to ask difficult questions about “the very nature of the regime” and demanded a change in the direction of “pluralism and toward a genuine respect for human rights” (Licht 2000: 120). Rather unsurprisingly, these criticisms coincided with the signing of the Helsinki Accords in 1975. In the aftermath of Helsinki, a petition movement emerged in Belgrade in 1976-77 with people “signing up on political issues, such as the death penalty or asking about the fact that the police had the discretion to deny citizens their passports and their right to travel abroad” (Licht 2000: 120). The movement was fairly limited with each petition attracting between 50 and 300 signatures, but “movement opened up a new stage, which was taken over in debates by the Slovenians on such issues as reproductive rights, gay and lesbian rights, and nuclear energy” (Licht 2000: 120). Rather tellingly, the human rights movement then seems to disappear from the Yugoslav political scene. Whereas activists elsewhere in Eastern Europe clung tightly to the human rights rhetoric as their most potent line of attack on their governments, Yugoslav activists appear to have gained little traction from it. There may of course be many reasons for this, but a plausible explanation is that human rights violations simply were not an explosive issue in Yugoslavia. As noted above, the country was the most open communist state in Europe and enjoyed close ties with the West. As a result, the human rights angle was not successful in Yugoslavia (Woodward 1995: 1).

It would take another ten years before the democratization/human rights rhetoric reemerged. Only in 1988 did activists form “an organization for Yugoslav democratic initiative” with branches throughout the country. However, this type of civil society mobilization occurred only *after* other Eastern European countries had begun to prepare for democratic transition (Licht 2000: 121). From a theoretical perspective, this is highly puzzling. Why did the country that seemed best prepared to make the step toward democratization in the mid-1980s lag behind the more repressive Soviet satellite states? In addition to the solution offered above, that is that Yugoslavia was sufficiently liberal to dissuade a popular uprising for Western democracy, it seems that the nationalist current trumped the liberal. However, one major exception to the general absence of pro-democracy movements in Yugoslavia did exist. In Slovenia, the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights teamed up with the Slovene

communists (including its media outlets) and the Catholic Church in 1988 to organize a campaign of protests in defense of the “Ljubljana Four” — a group of journalists that had angered the Yugoslav army by raising questions about its arms sales to Ethiopia. While fought in the name of human rights and judicial fairness in a democratic context, the fact that all Slovenian power holders united in this campaign betrays its nationalist element. In fact, the movement was a part of the Slovenian strategy for controlling Milošević (Pavković 2010: 109-10).

Unlike much of Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia’s most important pro-democracy movements took hold in 2000. In both Croatia and Serbia, mass mobilizations occurred in line with elections. Supported by Western funders, civil society groups made massive efforts to get people out to vote and monitor the elections. Whereas in Croatia the democratic opposition was able to rely solely on the elections themselves to oust the ruling HDZ, in Serbia mass demonstrations and a general strike were required to end Milošević’s rule (see the section on “Democratization in the Successor States”).

New Social Movements

Somewhat unsurprisingly, new social movements flourished in Yugoslavia in the 1980s, in particular in Slovenia and Serbia. The fact that the new ruling elites took a less repressive approach to social control meant that “non-political” activism was tolerated and at times even supported by official socialist institutions (Figa 1997: 164). Figa (1997) suggests that civil society emerged in Slovenia from the “culturally driven” “alternative scene” that grew out of the 1970s punk movement, “the first manifestation of civil society in Slovenia” (Figa 1997: 164). Slovenian leaders found it difficult to deal with new social movements (NSM) that emerged from this “alternative scene”. As Figa (1997) explains,

NSMs addressed issues not faced by the political establishment. They posed a dilemma for the rulers: By permitting NSMs to operate, the party-state allowed them to expand into the space for free expression, thereby giving up control over certain social and political processes, even though the party-state at any time could lay claim to that space if they were prepared to use violence. By clamping down on them it would arrest the process of democratization. Yugoslavia in general, and Slovenia in particular, were very proud of their progressive and democratic nature vis-à-vis the USSR and its allies. An antidemocratic purge would be embarrassing when Soviet totalitarianism was on the verge of collapse. (168)

In other words, the timing of the emergence of the Slovenian NSMs made repression difficult for the country's leaders, leaders who were not prone to repression in the first place. Still, Slovenian communists knew that the destabilizing potential of the NSMs was indeed very real. By exercising self-restraint and staying away from politically taboo topics, Slovenian activists were able to mobilize on a range of issues. "Those issues were rooted in postmodern concerns and included opposition to using violence in any form of human interaction, peace, minority rights, environmental issues, alternative forms of psychotherapy, and gay rights" (Figa 1997: 168-9). Furthermore, activists within the different movements cooperated with one another, as evidenced by "protest 'celebrations'" in 1986 and 1987 that brought together "feminists, environmentalists, and pacifists" (Figa 1997: 169). It is also worth noting that NSM activists not only exercised self constraint when it came to the issues they addressed, they also opted for nonviolent methods of struggle, that is, "various forms of peaceful, direct actions, for example distributing leaflets, to appeals for action through the official channels. ... They were essentially consciousness-raising movements" (Figa 1997: 169).

The peace movement was perhaps the most important of the Slovenian NSMs, not because it forced Slovenia to pursue progressive policies – it did not – but because it drove the Slovenian leaders onto a collision course with the rest of the federation. The main issue raised by the peace movement organization, which went by the name "The Working Group for Peace Movements," was that of conscientious objection. Yugoslavia utilized very broad conscription rules, and the concept of conscientious objection was foreign to the JNA. Under pressure from its own citizens and in the context of Serbian hostility, the Slovenian government agreed to press for changes to the conscription rules at the federal level. As a result, relations between Slovenia and Serbia/the federal government soured. This development coincided with the "Ljubljana Four" incident mentioned above, where journalists working for the Slovene publication *Mladina* claimed that the Yugoslav army was illegally selling arms to Ethiopia. In this conflict, the Slovene government, which may already have set its mind on a divorce from the federation, took the side of the journalists, thus adding further fuel to the intra-communist conflict. "The significance of the Slovene peace movement," then, "lies in its impact on Slovene-Yugoslav relations" (Figa 1997: 170).

Although the Slovenes were the first to organize on peace issues, they were not the only ones. In the mid-1980s, foreign peace activists helped form "a small group for peace and democracy" in Serbia. The "Belgrade Group for Peace and Democracy" was created, but it was not able to attract a large membership as many activists felt that the word "democracy" made the group

too political. As a result, the group failed to have an impact comparable to that of its Slovenian equivalent (Licht 2000: 121). As one former activist recalls,

It was fascinating how the issues of peace and democracy were not on people's minds in other parts of the country, including Serbia. They were still impressed by the Yugoslav policy of non-alignment, and believed that the issue of war and peace was simply unimportant for Yugoslavia as a whole. (Licht 2000: 121)

Women's movements were perhaps the most well-organized NSMs in Yugoslavia. Unlike most expressions of civil society, the women's movement organized itself across republican borders and with significant amounts of cross-national cooperation.

Yugoslav feminism began in the late 1970s in Belgrade and Zagreb as a critique of Yugoslav socialism's failure to liberate women, a critique expressed mainly through scholarly publications and the media. The feminist pen provoked a fierce backlash in the academy, the media, and the organs of the Yugoslav state, including the official communist women's conference. By the mid-1980s, feminists in Zagreb, Belgrade, and Ljubljana launched a small but radical new social movement. This feminist activism centered around two new types of activity: public forums and protests and provision of independent self-help services for women, plus continuation of the academic and media work. (Benderly 1997: 186)

The main practical concern of the women's movement was to protect victims of domestic violence and lobby on women's reproductive health issues. Lesbian branches of the movement struggled for equal recognition in law. "Unlike other NSMs, however, feminism held out little hope that society could be reformed at a deep level; the ideology believed that patriarchal control of women would persist in either a socialist or a capitalist system" (Benderly 1997: 183). The destructive developments in the late 1980s and early 1990s reduced the impact of the women's movement and marginalized it as "more important things" filled the agenda. Women were now expected to be patriotic and have as many children as possible in order to help their respective nations. Some of the structural changes experienced were unhelpful, as non-communist arrangements following the dissolution of Yugoslavia created high unemployment that hit women particularly hard (Benderly 1997: 196-8). Thus, during the civil wars of the 1990s,

Feminists in the Yugoslav successor states organized across national lines to protest the war's impact on women, and provided small-scale but significant opposition to the war. They also provided social services for its women survivors. However, a rift developed between those feminists who opposed nationalism and those who became more patriotic as they drew parallels between the victimization of women and the victimization of their nation. The new states marginalized the non-nationalist feminists and attempted to coopt the patriotic ones. (Benderly 1997: 184)

In Belgrade, a small group of feminists, "Women in Black," organized weekly silent vigils against the war on the city's main street. Perceived as unpatriotic, "they grew familiar with being spat upon and called traitors and whores," but still managed to organize an antiwar protest event in Vojvodina in 1993. 200 women from all over the former country participated, as did women from Western Europe (Benderly 1997: 200).

Yugoslavia also hosted various environmental movements, but these appear to have had a limited role in the country. Nonetheless, green groups organized in both Serbia and Slovenia. In Slovenia, esteem for the movements rose in the second half of the 1980s (as it did everywhere) in the aftermath of "several ecological catastrophes" (Figa 1997: 175). In Serbia, on the other hand, a major anti-nuclear energy movement was forged in 1986 and 1987. In an impressive effort, the movement gathered hundreds of thousands of signatures, mainly from schools and universities, and actually succeeded in overturning a government decision to build a nuclear power plant (Licht 2000: 120-1).

Religious Movements

Besides the fact that the Catholic Movement eventually came to side with the Slovenian government when nationalism became the most important issue in Yugoslavia, "the religious communists did not play a significant role toward the development of a civil society" (Mojzes 1997: 212).

Student Movements

Although students played some part in the 1980s social movements, they did not organize independently from other civil society groups during the decade. Instead, the impact of student protest was most significant at the beginning of civil society mobilization in the late 1960s and early 1970s, mainly in the Croatian protests against Tito and in favor of decentralization (Licht 2000: 120; Rusinow 1977: 296-306). Students also came to play an important role in the struggle against Milošević after the Dayton Accord had been signed, first in

1996-97 in response to hijacked local elections, and then during the Bulldozer Revolution of 2000 when the student-led Otpor emerged as a powerful political player (Marković 2012: 112). While Otpor usually receives most of the credit in analyses of the Serbian case, Bunce and Wolchik (2011: 97) note “the path-breaking effect” the eighty-day protests in 1996 and 1997 had on the political climate in the country. Also, Otpor grew out of the 1996-97 experience as many Otpor activists and leaders participated in the earlier student protests (Bunce and Wolchik 2011: 100).

Labor Movements

The two most important social movements of the Yugoslavian transition process were the labor and nationalist movements. While other civil society groups had legitimate grievances to vent, the Yugoslav workers found themselves in a unique situation. Yugoslavia was by definition a workers’ state. This meant that unlike other groups, workers were largely spared criticism from socialist politicians. After all, the workers were the backbone of the state, and how could the state condemn its own backbone? Nonetheless, “despite sharply deteriorating living standards, the working class was surprisingly quiescent in the early 1980s” (Vladislavjević 2008: 111). Strikes and work stoppages did take place, but on a manageable level, normally lasting for only a few hours. By 1984, this state of affairs began to change. The number of strikes in the country increased and by 1987 the situation began to spin out of control. “In that year,” Vladislavjević (2008) reports,

there were 1685 registered strikes and roughly 4.3 percent of all employees in the huge state-controlled sector of the economy took part in strikes as opposed to less than 1 percent in previous years. The workers’ protests now lasted longer than a day on average and, significantly, the number of strikes in large state enterprises, with more than 500 workers, was sharply on the increase. Roughly half of the strikers came from heavy industries and mining, but strikes in other sectors of the economy, as well as in health services and education, became increasingly frequent. In 1988 the number of strikes and strikers further increased, especially in large enterprises, and strikes became longer on average. (111)

In the early 1980s, when strikes were fairly limited, worker mobilization was concentrated in Slovenia and Croatia, the most developed republics of the federation, but by 1987 these regional differences had all but vanished completely. In short, workers throughout the country were voicing their discontent with the regime. As the next section will show, however, their

protests focused overwhelmingly on economic and workplace related issues, with political change a side matter (Vladisavljević 2008: 113-15). The workers' "demands centred on higher pay and subsidies for their deteriorating enterprises, the removal of unsuccessful or corrupt enterprise directors and a sharp reduction in bureaucracy and administration within and outside enterprises" (Vladisavljević 2008: 111-2).

Nationalist/Ethnic Movements

While the workers' privileged position within socialist ideology gave them significant leverage in their protests against the state, it was the nationalist movements that tore Yugoslavia apart. Nationalism was not a new phenomenon in 1980s Yugoslavia. The country had only been successfully established following World War II because Tito had managed to repress nationalist hostilities by forbidding debates about the past, and attempts by Croatian nationalists to gain more control of their republic's economy in the 1970s have been touched upon above. Although virtually all national groups were mobilized by the end of the 1980s,

The road to civil war began in March 1981 when Albanian students took their demands for better conditions at the University of Prishtinë to the streets in the time-honored tradition of students everywhere. Their demonstration touched a nerve of Albanian patriotic feeling, and over the next month anti-Serbian demonstrations demanding that Kosova become a Yugoslav republic became so massive that the federal government sent in troops. (Stokes 1993: 230)

Serbia was not of course interested in the realization of these demands, and the movement did not result in much political gain for Kosova Albanians. However, it did contribute to a deteriorating social context in Kosova, and by the mid-1980s, the autonomous province's Serb minority felt sufficiently harassed and discriminated against to demand change. The Kosova Serb movement began in 1985 with a protest outside the headquarters of the Kosova Communist Party. Not receiving the remedy they sought, the movement submitted a petition with 2011 signatures to the presidency of the Serbian Communist Party in early 1986, "demanding radical measures to stop the continuing harassment of non-Albanians" (Pavković 2010: 83). From this point on, the movement quickly gathered momentum.

After the first protest rally of a hundred Kosovo Serbs staged in 1986 in Belgrade, similar rallies, with greater numbers of participants, were organised in

Belgrade as well as Kosovo and Serbian cities. The organisers of these protests were Serb and Montenegrin farmers, skilled workers, teachers and low-ranking communist officials. This gave the movement the look of an anti-elite, grassroots movement of harassed Serb and Montenegrin minorities in Kosovo. (Pavković 2010: 83)

With Milošević's rise to power, the Serbian nationalist movement gained a powerful supporter. While one should not overlook Milošević's political calculations, there can be little doubt that the Serbian leader felt strongly about the nationalist issue. Like many Serbs, Milošević had no intention of seeing Serbia (or Yugoslavia for that matter) divided into smaller pieces simply because Kosova Albanians thought they deserved republican status and thus sovereignty over a territory in which they formed the majority. For Serbs, Kosova carries strong historical weight since it was here that the Serbs lost a major battle to the Ottomans in 1389, and Kosovar sovereignty was inconceivable to men like Milošević.

Unfortunately, the tensions between Serbs and Albanians quickly spread across Yugoslavia as other republican leaders saw Milošević as a proponent of a "Greater Serbia", a historical concept that had only been repressed by the creation of Yugoslavia. Consequently, nationalists throughout the federation came to seize on the notion of sovereignty. Pavković (2010) explains:

One of the primary aims of each of the dissident national ideologies was to reaffirm the sovereignty of 'its' nation over the territory that was claimed for it. The Croat and Slovene national ideologues saw the reaffirmation of sovereignty necessitating the creation of national armed forces within a new Yugoslav confederation or outside Yugoslavia. The reaffirmation of the sovereignty of the Muslims was to be carried out first through the reintroduction of Islamic values in public life and politics and eventually in the creation of an Islamic state. Albanian sovereignty was to be achieved first in a separate Yugoslav republic and then, possibly, in unification with Albania. Serb sovereignty was to be reaffirmed in the unification of all Serbs in a reorganized 'democratic integrative' Yugoslav federation; if this proved to be impossible, in a Serb state without other Yugoslav nations. (97)

Needless to say, the simultaneous realization of all of these aspirations was impossible. At the core of the matter lay the fact that some republics wanted more decentralization, or even independence, while Serbia, the heart of Yugoslavia, was not interested. In the context of a severe economic crisis and the disrepute of socialism as an economic ideology, few actors had the power, or desire, to stand in the way of the strong nationalist currents that swept the

country. As one scholar summarizes the situation, “nationalism became a dominant political force largely as an unintended outcome of high levels of mobilization and spiraling social, economic and political conflicts in a complex, authoritarian multi-national state which experienced a severe economic crisis” (Vladisavljević 2008: 6). The fact that republican leaders sought to gain from the nationalist tendencies within Yugoslavia did little to prevent this development.

Protest

As the previous section showed, diverse civil society groups engaged in protest activities throughout Yugoslavia in the 1980s. Before that, as we have also seen, students protested in the late 1960s. Mass mobilizations also took place in Croatia in 1971-2 after communist leaders there began a campaign to register people (ethnic Croats) in the Party in defense of nationalist interests. This nationalist movement involved strikes and demonstrations, including student strikes, but was not a “mobilization for democracy.” Rather, the Croatian movement set a troubling precedent for Yugoslavia that would eventually become the norm for mass action in the 1980s: mobilization for nationalism (Pavković 2010: 67-9). Similarly, the workers’ protests that gathered momentum in 1982 were not part of a democratization movement, but only demanded pay increases and the removal of unpopular managers and directors. What was under attack was not Yugoslavia’s political system, but its economic failures. By 1987, the strikes had reached enormous proportions, involving 360,000 workers spread out over 1570 strikes, four times as many participants as in 1985. Consistent with their efforts earlier in the decade, workers protested against income freezes and rapidly increasing inflation. In the summer of 1988, industrial worker protests reached their crescendo. Some of the major protest events included the following:

May 24: 300 out of 400 miners at the Đurđevik mine in north-east Bosnia marched to Belgrade after a 5-day strike failed to have any impact. Having completed the 70 km march, the miners protested in Belgrade until the federal authorities agreed to meet their demands. This was “the most visible in a series of miners’ protests, triggered by the pay freeze” (Vladisavljević 2008: 114).

June 17: 3,000 metalworkers from the Zmaj tractor factory outside Belgrade marched into the capital and demonstrated outside the Federal Assembly building, and, as a result, secured higher wages. Similar protests were held in Maribor (Slovenia) where thousands of TAM (car manufacturer) workers demonstrated for higher wages on that day and the next.

July 6: 5,000 workers from the Croatian Borovo shoe factory near the Serbian border struck, and when that didn't work went to Belgrade by bus. They were not seen by the Federal Assembly and therefore broke into the parliament building and left only after their demands were met.

July 16: 1,500 workers from Agrokomerc, a Bosnian agricultural company, staged a protest in Belgrade for higher wages and the resolution of the 1987 scandal involving the company. (Vladislavjević 2008: 113-15)

Parallel to these developments in the workers' movements, Kosova Serbs continued to mobilize for their cause, including large demonstrations in Vojvodina and Montenegro in July and August 1988. This is where things become interesting from a social movement perspective. Rather than perceiving mass mobilization within Serbia (which is where most of the workers' and nationalist protests took place) as a threat, Milošević saw them as an opportunity. He had already achieved the status of a hero with the Kosova Serbs, and when he skillfully incorporated the workers' movement into a common framework – “the antibureaucratic movement/revolution” Milošević suddenly had a “powerful tool” at his disposal — mass rallies (Stokes 1993: 235). Similarly to Khomeini's Islamic Revolution in Iran, the genius of the “antibureaucratic revolution” was that it came to mean all things to all people as it placed the blame for Yugoslavia's decline and internal difficulties with faceless bureaucrats. Stokes (1993) has beautifully captured the irony of this top-down mass movement:

In the rest of Eastern Europe people power, as it was called after huge popular demonstrations brought Corazon Aquino to power in the Philippines in 1986, was a force for democracy and pluralism. In Serbia, however, Milosevic mobilized people power to destroy Yugoslavia and to create the conditions for civil war. In September and October 1988 thirty thousand, fifty thousand, one hundred thousand, even one million people gathered in Serbian cities to shout their approval of Milošević's effort to subdue Kosova. When Albanians tried rallies of their own or conducted strikes in the important mining industry, as they did in November 1988, Milošević sent in the riot police and arrested their leaders. ... In the rest of Eastern Europe people power toppled the old Communist regimes in the name of democracy. In Serbia, Milošević manipulated the same force by racist appeals in order to legitimate his transformation of the League of Communists of Serbia into a nationalist party organized on neo-Stalinist principles. (235)

Under the broad “anti-bureaucratic” umbrella, Milošević mobilized the people of “Greater Serbia” in an effort to bring both Vojvodina and Kosova back under Serbian control. The “anti-bureaucratic revolution” raged between September 1988 and January 1989, “while the parallel mobilization of Kosovo Albanians and protests over the Serb-Slovene conflict unfolded between November and March” (Vladisavljević 2008: 145). In this conflict rich context, Milošević had little trouble rendering his nationalist populism attractive to Serbians. Uniquely among Eastern European leaders, Milošević relied on what Pavković refers to as “rally fever”, known locally as the “happening of the people” or “street democracy” (2010: 106-7) to mobilize the masses, and he did so to great effect. “Between September 1988 and March 1989 the eastern part of socialist Yugoslavia experienced high levels of mobilization, which rarely occur under authoritarianism. Public meetings, large street rallies, strikes, marches and demonstrations abounded, with a few hunger strikes, and even violence by the end of March” (Vladisavljević 2008: 145). While Yugoslavia thus experienced mobilization, it was again not mobilization for democracy, but mobilization for nationalism. Even when Milošević did not personally attend protest events, he encouraged them. By September 1988, again highly uniquely by authoritarian standards, “high officials of Serbia now effectively certified specific protest groups and their demands and claims as fully legitimate. They openly embraced popular participation in politics, albeit on populist terms” (Vladisavljević 2008: 150). The socialist elite’s unwillingness to defend the old Titoist/federal structure of Yugoslavia reached its pinnacle in Serbia: not only would the late Tito not be defended, he would be thrown to the wolves.

The anti-bureaucratic revolution passed through distinct regional phases. As the tabulation below indicates, large protests occurred in Vojvodina, Serbia, and Montenegro. What is particularly interesting about the table below is that virtually all protests followed the same pattern, namely that of demonstrations, or “rallies of solidarity,” in support of the Kosova Serbs.

Similarly to other instances of people power mobilizations in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, the protest activities were almost exclusively nonviolent and demonstrators always emphasized that they were not anti-systemic. “Speeches delivered by Kosovo Serb activists were always moderate” and activists “publicly denounced any potentially anti-systemic behavior” that might occur during the rallies (Vladisavljević 2008: 141).

Major “rallies of support” during the “anti-bureaucratic revolution” (source: Vladislavljević 2008: 151-66)

Location	Date	Number of participants
Smederevo, Vojvodina	880903	60,000
Kovin, Vojvodina	880903	10,000
Sombor, Vojvodina	880903	2,000
Crevanka, Vojvodina	880903	10,000 (first “multi-national” rally)
Sremska Mitrovica, Voj.	880915	30,000 (government org., incl. counter pro.)
Nikšić, Montenegro	880918	50,000 (more radical, “we want arms)
Cetinje, Montenegro	880918	30,000 (more radical, “let’s go to Kosovo)
Novi Sad, Vojvodina	880925	50,000 (demands for Voj. resignation)
Andrijevisa, Montenegro	880925	30,000
Bačka Palanka NS	881005	50,000 (demands for Voj. resignation) In support of the Mayor who made the demand
Rakovica (outside BG)	881004	5,000 (at the Federal Assembly in BG) Milosevic came to speak to demonstrators
Rakovica (outside BG)	881005	5,000 (inside Federal Assembly in BG) Milosevic came to speak to demonstrators
Novi Sad	881006	100,000 (from all over Vojvodina)
Titograd, Montenegro	881007	25,000 (economic and education demands) Broken up violently the next day, fizzled out by the 10 th .
Belgrade	881019	700,000 (archetypal “rally of solidarity”)
Titograd	890110	60,000
Titograd	890111	100,000 (collapse of the Montenegro leadership)

The most important protests of the anti-bureaucratic revolution did not take place in Serbia. Here, the plight of the Kosova Serbs needed little agitation to gain the attention of politicians and citizens alike. In Vojvodina and Montenegro on the other hand, both places where large numbers of Serbs lived, local elites were less enthusiastic about the movement’s demands. The protests in Novi Sad (the capital of Vojvodina) in July and August were crucial because they set the pace of the “revolution.” Not only did it represent a shift in the

location of protests from central Serbia to peripheral areas, it came to signify a new phase of mobilization. As one scholar explains,

the protest groups of Kosovo Serbs and their new allies from Vojvodina, Montenegro and central Serbia cast increasingly radical demands and targeted ever more powerful opponents. Unlike their earlier focus on protection for the Serbs by the courts and law enforcement agencies and the politics of inequality in Kosovo, they now principally demanded constitutional change in Serbia and a temporary shutting down of Kosovo's party and state organs. Instead of targeting Kosovo's high officials, they demanded the resignations of high officials of Vojvodina and their other opponents in the party Presidency and the Central Committee of the LCY, and denounced the leadership of Montenegro. (Vladislavjević 2008: 139)

The elites in Vojvodina and Montenegro feared that Kosova Serb demands for constitutional changes in Kosova, which would bring the autonomous province back under Serbian control, would spill over and threaten their own sovereignty. These fears were indeed well founded. Discontented with their own elites' economic leadership, citizens of Vojvodina joined the Kosova Serbs' call for the Vojvodina leadership to step down. Initially, the local communists were able to resist the large protests and cling to power, but their days in power were numbered. Eager to push through the constitutional reforms, Milošević and his Serbian colleagues supported the protest movement by helping its leaders gain access to means of transportation and other material resources (Vladislavjević 2008: 148). Thus, by early October the Vojvodina leaders could no longer withstand the popular calls for their resignations. On October 6th, Novi Sad came to a standstill. Approximately 100,000 people from all over Vojvodina as well as supporters from Serbia and Montenegro arrived in Novi Sad to participate in what would become known as the Yoghurt Revolution. Faced with demonstrators throwing packs of yoghurt at the Province Committee building, and without federal support, the Vojvodina high officials resigned and were replaced by leaders approved by Milošević and his entourage.

With Vojvodina in line with Serbian policy attention now shifted to Montenegro. As in the case of Vojvodina, solidarity rallies for the Kosova Serbs had soon assumed a life of their own, with Montenegrins sensing their opportunity to punish their leaders for the economic crisis. While Montenegro had witnessed ongoing protests since September, possibly with a short break in December, the final push occurred on January 10th and 11th.

On the early morning of 10 January a thousand workers of *Radoje Dakić* [Montenegro's largest company] set off to protest in the city centre, with the sole demand of the resignation of the high officials of Montenegro, including the republic's representatives in the federal party and state organs. Students and citizens joined the demonstration and the number of protesters in the central square rapidly swelled to 10 000. Despite freezing weather, thousands of workers from large state enterprises and citizens from all parts of the republic joined the demonstration throughout the day and evening. The number of participants rose to over 60 000. On the following day Montenegro was brought to a halt – effectively, though not officially, there was a general strike. After prolonged deliberation, the high officials resigned. At the time, there were nearly a 100 000 [out of a population of 600,000] protesters on the streets of Titograd. (Vladislavljević 2008: 164)

Similarly to Vojvodina, the officials that resigned were replaced by candidates handpicked by Milošević; this was “the first instance in post-1945 Yugoslavia that a communist leader from one republic was able to replace the leadership of another republic by his appointees” (Pavković 2010: 106-7). It should be noted that events in Serbia, Vojvodina, Montenegro, and Kosova did not remain regional affairs. Of the remaining republics, only Macedonia's leaders supported the Kosova Serb movement. In Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and, more surprising, liberal Slovenia, republican leaders condemned the Kosova Serb movement and supported the Montenegrin authorities' attempt to quell the protests (Vladislavljević 2008: 180). This of course had less to do with the Kosova Serb issue per se than with what was correctly perceived as a Milošević power grab.

In response to what Kosova Albanians viewed as disastrous developments in Vojvodina and Montenegro, 1,300 Kosova miners from Stari Trg went on strike several hundred meters below the earth's surface on February 20, 1989. They pledged to only come back up once the new Kosova leadership, made up of politicians aligned with Milošević, resigned. After a week below ground, it became clear to all that the miners were serious about their threat, and the politicians they opposed resigned. Triumphant the miners returned to the surface, only to be arrested for “counterrevolutionary activities” (Stokes 1993: 235). Furthermore, the three politicians' resignations were nothing but another Milošević trick, and they were immediately reinstated (Vladislavljević 2008: 184-5). Only one task remained for the anti-bureaucratic revolution, as

The Serbian Assembly, along with the assemblies of Kosova and Vojvodina that Milošević now dominated, approved the new constitutional arrangements, putting the autonomous regions firmly under the control of the Serbian central government in March 1989. Acceptance of the constitutional provisions

produced six days of rioting in Kosova, which Milošević subdued with substantial loss of life (estimates ranged from 20 to 140), but many Serbs rejoiced over the restoration of Serbian unity, as they thought of it. “Sovereignty returned to Serbia,” crowed the headline in *Politika*. “What was more natural, more humane, more democratic, for the Serbian people,” said Borisav Jović, Serbian representative to the federal presidency, “than, in accordance with their peace-loving traditions, to again enter upon the stage of history and make a demand in the form of the simplest, the most noble formula of justice and equality. ... [Serbs are] the people who in the modern history of the Balkans made the greatest sacrifices and demonstrated the greatest scope and evidence of its love for freedom and democracy. ... Serbia is equal now.” (Stokes 1993: 235)

Rather unsurprisingly, other republics did not share in Serbia’s enthusiasm over its expansion. Slovenia’s communist leader Milan Kučan had already stated during a public meeting that took place during the Kosova Albanian miners’ strike that the miners “were defending the very foundation of Yugoslavia” (Pavković 2010: 107), a comment less than appreciated in Serbia where “students immediately reacted to Kučan’s statement by organizing huge demonstrations at Belgrade University which drew hundreds of thousands of demonstrators” (Pavković 2010: 107). Students were not the only ones to react. True to form, Milošević used the Slovenian criticism to rally support around him, both from the population at large and the media. Yugoslavia was now on course for destruction. As Pavković (2010) concludes, “this type of intimidatory and coercive style of politics could neither be contained nor controlled within the framework of the consensus-seeking federal bodies of Yugoslavia” (107). Less than a year later, the glue that held Yugoslavia together, the LCY, had ceased to exist and left the road to civil war wide open.

Democratization in the Successor States

Somewhat ironically, civil war in Yugoslavia began with multiparty elections. In the context of nationalist mobilization and the need for politicians to disassociate themselves from the country’s communist past, pluralism and multiparty elections became tactics of political survival. Consequently, by the end of 1990, “all of the six Yugoslav republics had elected, in more or less free elections, new legislatures and new presidents” (Stokes 1993: 244). While liberal parties made inroads in many of the republics, all six presidents were former communists, and two -- Milošević and Montenegro’s Momir Bulatović -- “continued to rule in the manner of their predecessors” (Stokes 1993: 244). Hence, in many of the countries it seems fair to speak of rapid democratization. Independence also came rapidly to most of the former Yugoslav republics. With the exception of the special case of Serbia and Montenegro, the entity that, at

least for a while, retained the name of Yugoslavia, all the federated republics had become independent by 1993. Montenegro finally achieved independence in 2006. Vojvodina and Kosova remain parts of what is now Serbia (Vasilevski 2007).

Only in Slovenia, however, did democracy develop somewhat fully in a short length of time. As the richest and most European-integrated country, Slovenia quickly seceded from the federation, and with European support it was able to avoid a violent clash with the rest of the former country. Since the Slovenian socialist elites used the country's conflict with Milošević to propagate themselves as the leaders of a liberal regime, multiparty elections and Western integration made authoritarianism unlikely. Thus, "just two years into independence, Slovenia had a new constitution, a politically pluralist landscape with ten parties in the Parliament, a free press, and an independent judiciary" (Boduszyński 2010: 119). Unlike elsewhere in Yugoslavia, "the process of drafting a constitution that would be the mainstay of Slovenia's new democracy unfolded ... smoothly, along with most democratization measures" (Vasilevski 2007: 7).

The second country to democratize was Croatia, after 2000, when Tuđman had died and the HDZ's hold on power was weakened (Levitsky and Way 2010: 117). In both Slovenia and Croatia foreign intervention prevented the most severe forms of authoritarian rule. Although Tuđman ruled in a dictatorial fashion, due to his country's dependence on good relations with the West he made sure to the country met certain democratic standards. During the war with Serbia, Western powers tolerated Tuđman's authoritarian rule since he was considered an important player if the war was to be ended. After the signing of the Dayton Accords in 1995, however, the EU and the US increased their pressure on the president to democratize his country (Boduszyński 2010: 76). As a result of the declining economy (Boduszyński 2010: 77), mass protests broke out in Zagreb in 1996 (Boduszyński 2010: 88-9) and in 1998 a general strike took place (Boduszyński 2010: 90).

When change finally came to Croatia, it did so through an election victory for the opposition. Unlike in the Serbian case where Milošević refused to accept defeat, the Croatian dictator had died the previous year, and mass protests were not therefore necessary to force a political change. However, this does not mean that civil society groups were unimportant. Benefitting from the relatively liberal political climate of the 1980s, civil society groups did exist in Croatia, although they did not operate freely. Nonetheless, organizations such as GONG (Citizens Organized to Monitor Voting) and Glas 99 (Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections) waged effective get out the vote campaigns in favor of the opposition coalition, and engaged in independent election monitoring. As in

Serbia, foreign governments and NGOs provided large sums of money to facilitate the efforts of local NGOs and to provide them with training in matters such as election monitoring. The United States, through USAID as well as the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute were, along with the Open Society Institute, the most important funders. “The U.S. role in this respect was particularly significant and amounted to over \$5,200,000” (Bunce and Wolchik 2011: 83). In the end, however, democratization in Croatia came from above in the sense that no mass mobilization on the streets proved necessary to force political change. Still, civil society organization played an important role in their support of the democratic opposition (Bunce and Wolchik 2011: 78-84).

It was in the context of economic downturn, international pressure, and a unifying opposition that the HDZ lost support in the last two years of the 1990s. The death of ailing President Tuđman in November 1999 was also the symbolic death of the HDZ, at least as an anti-systemic nationalist party. Elections held in January 2000 dealt a resounding victory to a coalition of pro-Western liberal opposition parties. (Boduszyński 2010: 91)

The popular overthrow of Milošević in 2000 set the stage for democratization in Serbia, but despite the encouraging beginnings of post-Milošević Serbia, scholars did not consider the country democratized until “late 2003” (Levitsky and Way 2010: 109-13). As in the case of Tuđman, the West had tolerated Milošević’s authoritarian leanings. However, scholars have pointed out that “though some popular accounts have portrayed Milošević as a dictator akin to Iraq’s Saddam Hussein, Milošević did not rule by terror or total control of information” and even allowed criticism of his regime, although it was forbidden against him and his wife (Boduszyński 2010: 173). In reality, the Serbian political power balance was complex. As Levitsky and Way (2010) point out,

the Serbian regime was always competitive. No major parties were banned and, prior to the late 1990s, no major politicians were killed, imprisoned, exiled, or excluded from elections. Moreover, elections were not simply a façade. Outright fraud was relatively limited in scope, which meant that Milošević had to attract significant popular support to win presidential elections. Legislative elections also were highly competitive. In fact, the SPS never won a majority of the legislative vote and, after 1992, it never held a parliamentary majority. Thus, Milošević at times struggled to control parliament and even to prevent votes of no confidence. (197)

Still, Milošević managed to cling to both power and considerable popularity by painting a picture of a Serbia under attack, and as president he was able to circumvent the political process by issuing laws by decree. Although opposition parties sought to score political points when Milošević's dictatorial tendencies made themselves manifest, Boduszyński (2010) points out that the opposition "was hardly made up only of liberal-minded parties" (180).

Similarly to the case of Croatia, foreign powers eager to come to grips with the ethnic strife in the former Yugoslavia had little choice but to tolerate Milošević, especially after 1995 when he signed the Dayton Accords on Yugoslavia's behalf. The international community thus provided him with a "permissive international environment" (Levitsky and Way 2010: 107-8), although they combined tacit support with sanctions in what Ray Jennings refers to as "schizophrenic" diplomacy (ctd. in Bunce and Wolchik 2011: 93). While Western nations had begun to criticize Milošević as early as 1991, with sanctions following in 1992, the devastating war in Bosnia led them to prioritize peace over democracy and relations began to change. In 1995, Milošević was "embraced" by the world community when he voiced his willingness to participate in the peace process, but when he turned his attention to Kosova and allowed horrific violations of human rights to occur, NATO felt obliged to get involved militarily in the conflict (Boduszyński 2010: 197-8; Levitsky and Way 2010: 107-8). Bombs fell on Serbia for 78 days before Milošević caved in and signed an agreement that guaranteed the withdrawal of Serbian troops from Kosova. "During the bombing, the population initially rallied around the regime. Then support began to wane, falling sharply among nationalists as they realized that Kosovo was lost" (Boduszyński 2010: 200). Military humiliation combined with an economy in crisis to severely delegitimize the regime. The West did what it could to add to the regime's decline by providing opposition groups with money and training, which resulted in a viable presidential candidate, Vojislav Kostunica, backed by a nonviolent student movement, Otpor.

The "Bulldozer Revolution" was in many ways an extension of the 1996-97 events which saw an opposition coalition, *Zajedno* (Together) "mobilize(d) hundreds of thousands of people in daily protests for almost three months" against the government's refusal to recognize *Zajedno*'s victory in local elections (Levitsky and Way 2010: 108). As in Croatia, Western nations eventually saw fit to abandon their partial support of Milošević. In the Serbian case, it was in particular "a major change in the U.S. foreign policy" that cleared the way for civil society groups. Milošević's decision to engage Kosova in 1998 convinced the Clinton administration that the leader's role as guarantor of the Dayton Accords was no longer a sufficient reason to tolerate the regime. In addition, Milošević had simultaneously become more repressive at home, as

evidenced by a sharp increase in political assassinations and other forms of harassment of the opposition (Bunce and Wolchik 2011: 97-100).

Responding to the new Serbian context, foreign states and international NGOs began to support not only the opposition coalition DOS (Democratic Opposition of Serbia), but also the country's two main non-political opposition groups: Otpor and CeSID. While Otpor was a nonviolent mass organization made up mainly by young people and students, CeSID (Center for Election and Democracy) was composed of social scientists with a keen interest in statistics and polling. A large number of international actors provided both groups with extensive assistance in the shape of both funding and training. Otpor campaigned vigorously for the opposition parties and was a main force behind their unification. CeSID, on the other hand, trained 10,000 election observers and arranged for 23,000 volunteers to monitor the election (Bunce and Wolchik 2011: 108). CeSID's work made stealing the election an insurmountable task for Milošević. "In fact," Bunce and Wolchik (2011) write,

the vote tabulation generated by CeSID, along with other election-related activities carried out by the opposition and by CeSID, Otpor, and other civil society groups, served as the key stimulus for Serbian citizens to take to the streets to demand that Kostunica be allowed to take office. (102)

While democratic gains emerged only slowly after Milošević's fall, by 2003 the country was considered "democratized" (Levitsky and Way 2010: 109-13).

In Macedonia, economic weakness meant that federal Yugoslav paternalism had to be replaced by Western paternalism. Hence, large sums of aid were given to the country in an effort to stimulate enough economic development to stifle the ethnic tensions brewing between Macedonians and Albanians, the two largest ethnic groups in the country. "With virtually no active dissident movement and a weak post-communist civil society" (Levitsky and Way 2010: 124) present in the country, international NGOs came to act as Macedonia's "de facto civil society" (Boduszyński 2010: 161). This meant that policy was dictated by the West and Macedonian governments simply had to obey the wishes of foreign donors. The result was what Boduszyński (2010) has referred to as "simulated democracy" — a democratic facade designed to satisfy donors and keep aid flowing into the country. Although Western micro-management was far from ideal, it helped Macedonia avoid the type of ethnic strife that tormented much of the rest of the former Yugoslavia. Although Vasilevski (2007: 12) suggests that "Macedonia remains only a transitional democracy", Levitsky and Way (2010) conclude that the country "had

democratized by the late 2000s, due in large part to intense Western engagement” (124).

The Bosnia and Herzegovinan case remains the saddest of the six ex-Yugoslav republics. Having served as a battlefield during the brutal war of the early 1990s, its wounds are still healing. In order to end the war, a compromise solution was accepted that divided the country into “two virtually separate entities, the Bosniak-Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Serbian-dominated Republika Srpska” (Vasilevski 2007: 10). The details of this arrangement were set in order to protect all three ethnic groups from further victimization. However, the consequences of this arrangement is a paralyzed central state that cannot make any major decisions since both entities have the right to veto any decision. Since mutual distrust reigns in Bosnia and Herzegovina, both “political democratization and economic reform have been painstakingly sluggish” and the country remains in transition (Vasilevski 2007: 10).

While the successor states display diverging transition trajectories, they do have two things in common. First, nationalism has played a crucial role in shaping not only relations between the countries, but also domestic power relations. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia are examples *par excellence*, where citizens still vote almost exclusively along ethnic lines today. Second, in all countries of the former Yugoslavia the international community played an immense role in shaping post-Yugoslav developments (Papandreu 2000).

Conclusion

Even within the admittedly complex universe of democratization processes, Yugoslavia’s transition to democracy stands out as particularly complicated. The range of actors and ethnic groups involved makes Yugoslavia incredibly complex. One of the greatest challenges when speaking of Yugoslav democratization is that no such thing ever happened. The country that began to democratize earlier perhaps than any other Eastern European country never completed the process, since it had ceased to exist by the time democracy was consolidated. Many lessons can be learned from studying Yugoslavia’s painful transition, but the most important from a civil society perspective may well be this: it matters little if a country can boast a vibrant civil society if politicians and aggrieved groups can turn the population’s attention away from “luxury concerns” such as democracy, human rights, and basic freedoms to more primordial issues like nationalism and basic survival.

What is striking when reading about civil society in Yugoslavia, especially in Slovenia and, to a slightly lesser extent, Serbia, is that civil society actors

seem to have had more in common with Western Europe than activists in other socialist countries. If this observation is correct, it points to a potentially important theoretical point: in a context of democratization efforts, civil society is, rather counter-intuitively, more potent when repressed and working below ground than when given room to maneuver. In the case of Yugoslavia, liberal civil society groups, such as democratization and human rights groups, completely failed to make their voices heard. The reason for this is simple: if authoritarianism is not a big problem in people's everyday lives, neither can the struggle against such a system be. In short, the movement is irrelevant. This dynamic is reinforced if other concerns emerge as more salient, such as nationalism and a failing economy. Thus, in the Yugoslav case we might suggest that the democratization movement did not fail because of state repression, but rather because rival movements, in particular ethnic/nationalist ones, came to dominate civil society as mass mobilization.

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