



The Ethnic Factor as an Influence on the Wars of the Subsequent Process of Dissolution of Yugoslavia

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Abstract

The present work shows a study on the disintegration of Yugoslavia and its effects, for this the purpose is to analyze the dissolution of Yugoslavia from the point of view of ethnicity, in this sense arises the question before: How did the ethnic factor influence the disintegration of Yugoslav? The methodology applied in this work is qualitative and documentary, whose results show and confirm that many of these dissolution factors are ethnic. Finally, as a conclusion it can be observed that in a very direct way, almost always the ethnic cause was linked to the different secessionist processes that took place between 1990-1999, the project of union of the South Slavs (Yugoslavia) was destined to fail since its first attempt at accession, at that time what motivated its union was to protect itself from its neighbors, the Imp. Austro-Hungarian and Germany, which were more socially developed.

Keywords: Ethnic Factor; Wars Dissolution; Yugoslavia

Introduction

The twentieth century was a very conflictive period, characterized by nationalist, fascist, communist and capitalist currents. Within this framework, Pan-Slavism was born, a nationalist feeling of the Balkan ethnic groups that sought their status as a republic. Given the prevailing need felt by these ethnic groups, which were scattered throughout Europe, they sought to protect themselves from their rival neighbors, who, like the Slavs, were intended to hegemonize in Europe.

The present work is based on the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the effects of which are reviewed in this study. In order not to fall into ambiguities and to be more specific, the dissolution of Yugoslavia will be the object of analysis, from the ethnic point of view. So the question arises: How did the ethnic factor influence the disintegration of Yugoslavia? Therefore, this analysis is stratified as follows: Chapter I describes the situation that this union experienced from the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes where the

foundations of Yugoslavia that would emerge as a socialist republic were laid, after the triumph of Tito's partisans.

In addition, the background that sowed the rivalries between Croatia and Serbia will be reviewed, which would take shape during the Croatian secessionist process, traditionally subjugated to the power of Belgrade, despite being one of the most powerful Republics, economically speaking. The first nationalist groups of separatist character appear during the government of Tito, who made certain constitutional reforms in order to cease the actions of these subversive groups, providing greater autonomy to each of the Republics.

In chapter II, there are the clashes that took place during the Yugoslav wars, between the Republics that sought their independence and Serbia, where the ethnic factor has a great impact, given the prevailing need that each had to seek an ethnically homogeneous entity that would shelter their nationalist ideals. Special emphasis

is placed on the Bosnian war, which is where it was most notorious that this was a purely racial war.

In addition, an important point was the fall of communism, an important factor of cohesion, especially in the countries of Eastern Europe, which had welcomed this system during the Cold War. Finally, chapter III shows the analysis of the causes that led to the dissolution of Yugoslavia, here is the answer to the question posed as a problem.

Chapter I

From the Monarchy to Titus

The "unity"

In 1918 one of the first attempts at unity is observed, conceived in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slavs which, although it meant a great initiative on the part of Yugoslav intellectuals and political leaders, would end up failing as well as the subsequent attempts at unification. The main trend that characterized the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slavs was its "economic instability and its ineffectiveness in integrating the multiple nationalities that made up the kingdom, largely due to its cultural, religious and linguistic diversity" [1].

We can see how the rough edges between Croats and Serbs begin to take shape, given that both ethnicities saw themselves as opposition forces both politically and socially. "Largely caused by the subjugated situation that Croatia had in the Austro-Hungarian empire, it now represented the federative force in the nascent kingdom, meanwhile, the Serbian political autonomy that sought a centralism was reduced by the opposition generated by its Croatian peers" [2].

To such an extent that his situation would be described, in Foreign Affairs magazine, Armstrong mentioned that "The country had had a turbulent political history since its founding, with twenty-five cabinet changes in ten years." Finally, this failed attempt at unity would culminate in 1929 when King Alexander I, motivated by the instability and structural weakness of the parliament, established a dictatorship [3].

The new Yugoslavia

During the Second World War, two important events took place that would mark Yugoslavia; the establishment of the Ustaše pup-

pet government in Croatia, and the emergence of the political figure of Tito, a military leader who commanded the partisan resistance forces against the Germans. In this period the country was renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which was also unable to cease hostilities that existed between the ethnic groups.

In addition, the first of those takes place since before the war, since the Croatian nationalists, considered that the autonomy given by the Regent Paul had been very little retributive for their demands, so it is here where Pavelic appears on the scene, who would proclaim an Independent State of Croatia days before the Yugoslav troops surrendered to the Axis powers, establishing a pro-fascist regime and collaborator with the Nazis.

Consequently, the Ustaše were ultra-conservative and nationalist groups, ideologues of Greater Croatia, it did not take them long to begin their genocide and persecution against the Serbs, Gypsies, Jews and Orthodox. This organization would be one of the first ultranationalist groups that would see the light in Yugoslavia, sowing the bases for what would happen during the Yugoslav ethno-religious wars, where indiscriminate violence would be present, marked by resentment of the acts committed by the Ustaše against the Serb minority in Croatia.

The second important event during this period is the emergence of Tito as a political leader and representative figure of Yugoslav unity. Who once the war would take command of Yugoslavia in a dictatorship that was able to keep the different Yugoslav ethnic groups in relative peace, according to the documentary *The Death of Yugoslavia*, "the slightest attempt to start a nationalist insurrection was undermined by Tito, managing to keep the six republics together with an iron fist" [4].

By virtue of maintaining social cohesion, one of the instruments used by Tito was the literature that exalted the actions carried out by the partisans, the propaganda of unity, patriotism and fraternity had managed to maintain a slight brotherhood among the Yugoslav republics, it is thus that "the writers were considered, as engineers of human souls, charged with creating a Yugoslav culture" [5].

First signs of fragility

However, Tito had set aside certain economic aspects that afflicted post-war Yugoslavia, mainly by rebuilding the civil and governmental structures that had been looted during the German

occupation. The marked social and economic indicators that differentiated the more developed republics from those that had prospered the least were radicalized.

On the other hand, Casanova says that 1966 would be the year that begins the decomposition of Yugoslavia; Croatia and Slovenia were the republics that generated the most income from tourism, so they advocated decentralization, because they perceived that they were not receiving enough benefits compared to the poorer republics. The wounds of World War II were never closed and, while the ghost of the Ustaše haunted the Croats, the Serbs were accused of claiming the hegemony of a Greater Serbia [5].

In 1971, the Croatian Spring would put at risk the rigid unity that Tito had managed to consolidate, multiple protests aroused in that Republic, seeking the decentralization of powers, according to Glavic, "several Croatian intellectuals and political leaders also thought that their language and culture was in danger." In a failed attempt by the government to cease the protests, an attempt was made to censor all kinds of propaganda that would intensify the hostile environment that was developing. A fact arises that today is considered a cause of the resurgence of nationalist groups, honoring 2018 *the saying the repression generates more resistance*, "several purges of those nationalist leaders, both Croatian and Serbian, were carried out within the Communist Party" [6,7].

These events not only failed to put an end to the revolts, but, contrary to expectations, aggravated the situation, societies less identified with the nationalist cause now did so and minority groups went from being unknown to having in their ranks a large number of followers. "The Matica Hrvatska society, which, in one year, sees the number of its members increase from 2'000 to 49'000 [6].

In 1974 a new constitution of Yugoslavia was issued, where a large fragment of the claims of the Croatian Spring were recognized, various administrative acts previously reserved for the federal government in Belgrade were also decentralized. Where republics could have a say in the affairs of the state, but not the state exercising power over republics, Tito's role became one of arbitration.

Which meant the propaganda of "unity" that had been trumpeted by the state had become part of history, relevant figures such as Frandjo Tudjman, which would make its appearance in the political sphere for the first time during the student protests of '71, would

arise as a result of such a disastrous decision. Social differences, then, became more apparent. "Like a cloud of smoke, likewise, individualism and rough edges between the republics were on the rise." [8].

However, those sectors that vehemently called for a decentralization of power regained greater autonomy. And this can be analyzed as a direct antecedent of what would happen two decades later, as already mentioned, behind closed doors the republics could decide on their own competences without having the need to first consult with the state, thanks to this each one was governed by its own legislation.

In economic matters, the liberalization of the economy allowed more income to be generated, but these were not received by the entire state, but most of it was for local governments, which led to social exclusion to the regions that produced the least. The immediate consequence of this, takes place that same year with two important events, the beginning of a severe economic crisis and the assumption of the status of autonomous republic to Kosovo; with Parliament and own government.

This is how we arrive at 1980, with an unstable Yugoslavia strongly hit by economic crises, where inequalities between republics were increasingly evident and product of that the emergence of increasingly radical nationalist groups, only united by the firm figure of its dictator, who would meet death the same year, it is from here that the situation of the federation begins to turn gray.

Chapter II

Dissolution of Yugoslavia

Yugoslav wars

Only 10 years after Tito's death, we find a federation very close to the brink of a war, each Republic had its nationalist leader, however, the most notable were those that had historically been rivals, Serbia and Croatia, Slobodan Milosevic and Frandjo Tudjman, respectively.

In 1989, the first impasse of the war took place, the Serbian nationalists commanded by Milosevic would undertake actions in Kosovo, multiple revolts known as the "Anti-Bureaucratic Revolution". Where in an act of nationalist exaltation he promises the Serbs "They will never be beaten again". Under these two slogans,

"Serbian nationalism abolishes the autonomy that both Kosovo and Vojvodina had acquired during tito's last years" [4].

Consequently, the political opponents of Serbia in Montenegro were replaced by supporters of the cause, the most relevant case of them is the change of presidency. In this way Serbia was guaranteed three more seats in the Assembly of the Communist Party, hegemonizing and securing greater power in the plenary. Thus, at this point, if we stop to compare these two situations it can be inferred that the process of Serbian expansionism was directed towards the same one used by Nazi Germany during the Second World War, under the pretext of the reunification of all Serbs and the use of nationalism in between, Greater Serbia was beginning to take shape and gradually ceased to be a utopia.

The rough edges between Slovenia and Serbia began with the publications that the magazine Mladina made mocking Belgrade. But undoubtedly, something that exacerbated the mood, was that Janez Janza, a high political leader in Slovenian secessionism was imprisoned and accused of treason, "revealed the plans of the Federal Army to intervene in the republic in case of attempts at separation" [9].

For his part, in the documentary "the death of Yugoslavia" illustrated by Mitchell and MacQueen, Milosevic's response is evidenced where he would not wait and would send his followers to organize the so-called "march of truth", however this would be stopped by the Croatian authorities who declared that no agitator would pass through their territory. Because of this an extraordinary congress was convened, where it was evident that Yugoslavia was beginning to crumble, in the middle of the plenary the Slovenian representatives decided to leave the Party. What initially emerged as a new form of freedom of expression would later rise to a political issue, dragging down the neighboring Republic of Croatia, which would also choose to leave the Yugoslav Communist Party. A year later both proclaimed their independence 1995 [4].

Such is the case, as a result of this analysis a domino effect, which is generating fall after fall, finally giving rise to the Yugoslav wars. At the same time, it is in these periods when the fall of the USSR and communism together with the beginning of the disinte-

gration of Yugoslavia coincide, so that "the nationalities no longer saw an element of cohesion that would keep them united to each other" [10].

Clash of nationalisms

The situation of Krajina is one of the many examples that the past does not forgive, the turning point that marks the beginning of this conflict is the presidential election that takes place in Croatia, resulting in the winner, Frandjo Tudjman, who was a fervent Croatian nationalist¹.

The Serbs of Knin had revealed themselves alongside a conglomerate of activists who took over the railways and the main street linking Zagreb to the coast. Thus endangering tourism, which was one of Croatia's main sources of income. Precisely, this is a factor why there is no direct confrontation between the Yugoslav federal army and the Slovenian territorial defense forces, since "for Milosevic there were no Serbian claims in an ethnically homogeneous territory, unlike the previous Croatian case" [9].

The role of the television media takes a very important role, both Croatian and Serbian television sought to exalt their nationalisms and ridicule or give the role of antagonist to the other. The climax of this situation, would be when Yugoslavia TV, would show images where a Croatian general can be seen reporting on war tactics to mercenaries. This would be considered treason by the Yugoslav authorities. This would generate a series of chain reactions, conflicts arise between the armies of Croatia and the Yugoslav army, who until then "had not intervened by temor to the reaction of the West" [4].

This conflict would end 7 months later, although, although they no longer fought directly, the clashes between Croats and Serbs continued to take place in the following independence processes.

Expansion of the conflict

By 1992, in the struggle to determine the hegemony of nationalisms, they caused the conflict to expand to Bosnia, which was initially intended to be divided between Croatia and Serbia, due to a secret treaty that both had signed. Krajina's self-proclaimed presi-

¹Krajina: Croatian region with a Serb ethnic majority, which during the Yugoslav wars revolted against the independence of Croatia.

dent, Milan Babic, declared: "If Croatia proclaims independence, Krajina will meet with the Serb areas of Bosnia." According to the newspaper, El País, it would predict that the Republic of Bosnia will be the first to suffer the consequences of the proclamations of independence 1991 [11].

It is from this moment that the conflict becomes purely ethnic, both Tadjman and Milosevic had agreed in the agreements of karadjordjevo and Graz, the division of Bosnia into autonomous entities related to their respective ethnicity, in order to expand their areas of influence. In this way the Sprska Republic and the Croatian autonomous community of Herzeg-Bosnia emerge. War crimes would be perpetrated on both sides; such as mass disappearances, exodus of people and processes of ethnic cleansing².

On July 11, Serbian forces attack the city of Gorazde, a city located east of Sarajevo and controlled by Muslims; this meant the beginning of the campaign of "ethnic cleansing" carried out by the Serbs against their enemies. Thousands of people were killed or expelled from their homes and sent to concentration camps [12].

Just as Serbia was accused of the crimes committed during the siege of Sarajevo, the genocide in Srebrenica and many others, the Croats took care of the city of Mostar, where its historical heritage would be destroyed; Ahmići and ethnic cleansing in the Lašva Valley. Most of these persecutions were carried out for ideological, ethnic and religious reasons³.

There are three important phrases in this process that make it clear that the war departed from its initial purpose

- *"Bosnia was a creation arising from the Ottoman invasion [...] until then it was part of Croatia, a Catholic kingdom closely connected to Croatia."* [13].
- *"Neither history nor sentimentalities should allow multinationalism to exist in the Balkans"* [14].
- *"You must make it clear that there will be no indication that we want a tripartite division of Bosnia."* [15].

In this part of the story the Serbs are known as the antagonists, however, by the express words of Tadjman, he noted their ethnic issues, who gave direct orders to the Bosnian-Croats to take control of the areas relative to Croatia, in the search for a large ethnically homogeneous state, an ideal that was also shared by Serbia.

Dissolution

The Bosnian war would end in 1995, with the signing of the Dayton Accords, being one of the last secessions to occur in Yugoslavia. Making a point and apart, 4 years later, in Kosovo, at the end of 1999, the Albanian refugees returned, initiating a series of reprisals against the resident Serbs, expelling 100 thousand of them from the territory, considered the cradle of the Serbian nation [12].

The wars fought between the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and the Yugoslav federation, increased the economic and social crises in Serbia, added to the foreign intervention of NATO bombing Belgrade, precipitated the last secessionist process, declaring the independence of Kosovo and with it the last vestiges of what had been Yugoslavia met with an end⁴.

Chapter III

Influence of ethnic factor

Since before their first unification, the Slavic ethnic groups mostly sought full autonomy, where each one can constitute a great country where its inhabitants can coexist only with their correlatives, in this way the idea of a Greater Serbia and a Greater Croatia arises, strongly influenced by their nationalist pasts.

During the wars of Yugoslav disintegration we can see how there is a competition between the republics to hegemonize their respective ethnicity. Historically, Serbia had represented in that country the largest representative force, however, it had managed to be limited by the autonomy that was given to Vojvodina and Kosovo after the drafting of the 1974 Constitution. The constitutional reforms to overcome all these problems were embodied in that Magna Carta of 1974 which, in turn, "has been described by most analysts as the GERM of the conflicts of disintegration of Yugoslavia" [9,12].

²Republika Srpska: Bosnian autonomous region controlled by Bosnian Serbs

³Ethnic cleansing: systematic elimination by Serbia and Croatia in Bosnia, against the Muslim population, during 1992-1995.

⁴Kosovo Liberation Army: insurgent terrorist group seeking Kosovo's independence

But why is special emphasis placed on this Constitution?, because the answer is found several decades later, with the resurgence of nationalist groups, which, in Serbia, would motivate the so-called "Anti-Bureaucratic Revolution" and in the rest of the republics the emergence of separatist groups that would promulgate the secessionist processes of which we already have knowledge, it should be emphasized that in all those processes, the percentage of citizen approval was a number much higher than 90%, with the exception of Bosnia where the process was boycotted, however it would also reach a figure that bordered on 65%.

The situation becomes much more radical in the Bosnian war, where the traditional ambitions of Serbia and Croatia are made clear, seeking the repartition of that territory, whose purpose was to banish the Muslims, who culturally were very alien to the Slavs. The Muslim presence in Slavic lands has its origin in the battle of Kosovo, which arose in 1389, when the Ottomans conquered the Balkan area, where they would exercise dominance until the Balkan War in 1912, when they would lose these regions, however, their inhabitants did not leave those lands, on the contrary, they allied with the Slavs forming a single country.

Which makes two aspects evident, the first that a real solution was not really sought with the promulgation of said Charter but only to appease the spirits, the main consequence that was had, was to make nationality prevail over citizenship. The second aspect made it clear that the Yugoslav project was destined to fail, their marked differences could not continue to coexist.

Conclusions

Historically, it can be observed that these minority ethnic groups were subject to exclusion, in the areas where Albanians and Muslims were the majority, a greater social and economic backwardness was evident, of which the richest republics, Croatia and Slovenia, always suffered a better distribution of State income, given that these were the ones that generated the most capital, they saw in a bad way that their money goes to these areas and not to their people, another consequence of the individual ones that arose as a result of the Constitution of 74. This situation would enact on the Croatian and Serbian side to be considered as an inferior race, thus initiating processes of ethnic cleansing and genocides such as that of Srebrenica, which had not happened since the Second World War.

That is why returning to the theme of the "Anti-Bureaucratic Revolution", it can be seen that it is linked to the concept of Greater Serbia, which is further accentuated with the independences of Croatia and Slovenia. At first the Yugoslav authorities thought that Milosevic's plan was to keep the federation alive, however the motto of unity was changed to that of a Serbia for the Serbs, in this way a series of reforms was undertaken that would allow to expand the Serbian area of influence, the nationalist factor plays a very important role, because from the beginning of the conflicts, in Kosovo, they always appealed to their "glorious past", based on that, they made territorial claims where their ethnicity was the majority, claiming that by "right" it belonged to them, the Republica Sprska and the Krajina insurrection were the result of that, also encouraging hatred towards the other nationalities, which were considered treacherous and enemies of Serbia.

Within this framework, favorable contents have been obtained to determine if the ethnic factor really played a role. As could be seen, it did, and in a very direct way, almost always the ethnic cause was linked to the different secessionist processes that took place between 1990-1999. The project of union of the South Slavs (Yugoslavia) was destined to fail from its first attempt at accession, at that time what motivated their union was to protect themselves from their neighbors, the Imp. Austro-Hungarian and Germany, which were more socially developed. During World War II, it was the anti-fascist struggle, in the Cold War, the fear of an invasion of the USSR. With the fall of communism, there was no ideological factor of cohesion, therefore, there was no longer any reason to continue this project, accelerating the inevitable, its disappearance from the international arena in 2003.

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