

VERA ST. ERLICH

# Family in Transition

*A Study of 300 Yugoslav Villages*



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## FAMILY IN TRANSITION



FAMILY  
IN TRANSITION

*A Study of  
300 Yugoslav Villages*

VERA ST. ERLICH

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## P R E F A C E

### Story of a Survey

IT BEGAN in Zagreb in 1937, when a group of student friends suggested that I write for the Yugoslav press a series of articles on the position of Moslem women. The students were bitter about the "enslavement" of their sisters who had been married in traditional manner. I was not very enthusiastic about attacking the women's veil or the lattice window, but I was willing to study and report on Bosnian family life. It was the end of the spring-summer term, and we drew up a questionnaire which the students took home with them during their summer vacation. It was to be a small research effort into the domestic way of life of the Bosnian Moslem.

During this same summer I gave a series of lectures on psychology in a teacher seminar. Teachers had come from all parts of Yugoslavia to a mountain resort. When they heard of my plan to study the Bosnian family, they at once wanted to know: Why only the Bosnian Moslems? In their own Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, there still existed bride purchase, bride abduction. . . . "Come along to our parts too, and make an inquiry," they said, "we will help you." Alas, I told them, I had no funds for such an undertaking! But they insisted that all I needed to supply was paper and postage stamps; they would provide the rest. "We will prepare for you a list of a thousand teachers, the outstanding ones from all provinces, and country doctors too. Come on, make your inquiry!"

During the summer school I discussed the problems of their home districts with these teachers, and we tried out various questionnaires till I had worked out a satisfactory form. They, for their part, obtained membership lists from their official organizations, and from these they selected the most suitable village teachers in every part of the country. In Yugoslavia, most teachers are men, thus the majority of those I polled were men. I sent out one thousand questionnaires, each containing a hundred and thirty questions on fourteen pages. To each set I attached three blank sheets.

When the reports began to come in, I realized the enthusiasm with which the work had been taken up. I received back a third of my questionnaires, and of these 305 were usable, most of them painstakingly filled in. One could not help but feel that these teachers

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eagerly welcomed the initiative for such an undertaking. They had assembled information tirelessly, made trips into the surrounding countryside, reported at length on particular questions, described typical peasants of their areas, and pointed out peculiarities of their districts.

The actual replies to my questions were only part of the material I received from my interviewers. One youth wrote from a remote mountain village: "Are you mad? Why not put in at least ten more sheets?" Clearly, there was not a scrap of paper to be had in his back-of-beyond place, yet he was full of impatience to tell me all about what he considered fascinating conditions. Indeed, most of my young helpers were equally enthusiastic.

Many of these students and teachers—there were doctors and priests among them—lived in remote villages where they were the only educated persons. They felt that they were storing up treasures before it was too late. They were anxious to record their knowledge of old ideas and traditional attitudes before they all were lost. Already Nazis were on the march. How long would it be before Yugoslavia was attacked—and then who could tell who or what would survive? The shadows cast by the war were dark indeed.

Together with many answers came invitations to visit their localities. "I will be your guide through the Shumadia, the heart of Serbia; nobody knows every house as I do. My father still lives here, and he fought against the Turks." "Come to Herzegovina to see me," wrote another, "I am a doctor in the most out-of-the-way Moslem settlements. This is where you can see archaic family life!" "Come to me," ran another letter, "I am a magistrate near Sarajevo, I can show you every village in these parts and also gypsy settlements." And so on. The University of Belgrade sent for me, and I had to accompany their ethnologists and sociologists on their expeditions. This resulted in an engagement for a series of lectures at Belgrade University, where I reported the preliminary results of my inquiry.

All this time, the menace of German invasion hung over us. There is a fairy tale by the Grimm brothers in which a princess is making shirts for her brothers, who have all been turned into swans by a witch. The shirts must be ready on a certain day, and when they are put on the swans, these will turn back into men. The princess stitches day and night, to get her shirts finished, but she cannot complete the last sleeve. When the swans fly past and she throws the shirts over them, they all turn into complete men except the youngest, who retains a wing in place of one of his arms. During two drawn-

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out years I had the increasing feeling that I had to hurry, to get my shirts ready, or I might not succeed at all, and my swans would stay bewitched and fly away from me. I feared that I would never be able to digest all the mass of material; yet I had to extract its essence. Quicker, ever quicker! I worked at breathless speed!

I felt I was trying to race an oncoming flood. The Nazis marched into Vienna. They marched into Prague. There were already Nazi units on the Yugoslav frontier. The pressure was rising. Police and government were riddled with fifth columnists. Whoever was not in the service of Germany had become suspect. I was among the many to have my premises searched by the police. My enormous mail-bag had aroused suspicion. Who knew what lay behind it? But we still had "connections," and they succeeded in preventing my arrest and ensuring that my research material was not touched.

But my tension grew with the mountain of questionnaires and reports that accumulated in my home. I tried to devise a statistical method for handling the data, but that was possible only so long as I had my questionnaires with me, and I was afraid that this would not be long. My tension was increased by the excited letters my interviewers sent me daily. Their feverish mood came from a keen awareness that they too had a short time remaining to collect data on the old ways of life. Their excitement was heightened by the great impoverishment of the countryside and the terrible living conditions of the women.

The economic depression which hit Yugoslavia in 1930 was still pressing hard on Yugoslav country folk in 1937. As Nazi pressure increased, political factors deteriorated more and more. Many of my teachers expected and suggested steps I might take to help "the countryside." The excitement of the teachers made it increasingly hard for me to remain objective. The partisan tone of their descriptions, which began to assume almost a fictional coloring, constituted a genuine obstacle to my work. To master the excess of material and the emotional nature of the reports I had to find some sort of key to bring them all down to an objective common denominator. Months went by while I worked this out, then assembled and analyzed my matter, drew graphs, and calculated percentages.

Then came April 1941, and the Nazis invaded Yugoslavia. The German invasion, complete with Gestapo, ended everything. Desperately I was working on my last sleeve. I now concealed the questionnaires in the house of a neighbor, but I did not let out of my sight the extracts I had made. I continued to work on my tables of



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statistical results, always keeping handy the colored pencils for my graphs. But at last the Gestapo caught up with me. Two of their men came "to call." It was night, and I was alone in the large house. The rest of the family was no longer there. But I found myself absolutely calm, and I actually succeeded in persuading these agents that what I was handling were statistics on venereal diseases, a piece of work for the Institute of Hygiene, which "everybody" knew about. Wonder of wonders, they swallowed this and left me, saying they would "call again." Another chance to finish the last sleeve.

But after that visit I had to move. I left our home, my beloved native city, Zagreb, and my native land. A paid adventurer smuggled me through the enemy lines to Dalmatia, then occupied by Italians. My guide got me through. Few succeeded, but I was one of the lucky ones.

At that time Germans were not in control of the Adriatic coast. Before I left, I had packed my material and most important notes in a large suitcase which I handed over to some Croatian naval officers. My native Croatia was now a German vassal state, and Yugoslav naval officers of Croatian origin were—at least in name—German "allies." Among them were some old friends whom I trusted to keep my suitcase for me. Some weeks later, it was again in my possession. The officers had taken it across a frontier guarded by German, Croatian, and Italian troops. The naval boys brought it to me at Split, the capital of Dalmatia. With broad grins they saluted and were gone!

In the "Fortress of Europe," there was the silence of the grave. Only in this small region under Italian command could one breathe—cautiously. Dalmatia, with its cities and former republics for centuries connected with the Republic of Venice, has a character of its own. Here, in the attics of the patrician houses, I discovered old books and papers; so during this forced stay I set about collecting further material. I also filled pages of my notebooks in the markets and the fishermen's harbor.

In the autumn of 1943, Mussolini's empire collapsed, after the Allies had invaded southern Italy. The Italian occupation forces in the Balkans disintegrated. Now the Nazis occupied northern Italy and the whole of the Balkan peninsula. When they came up against Split, the Partisans at first tried to defend the city. There followed three weeks of Stuka bombardment. When at last the Germans came in, a third of the population left the city to avoid them, and withdrew into the rocky mountains of the *Karst* and on the islands, farther south.

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In the battle, our house had been hit and burned to the ground. Also destroyed was the place where I had intended to hide my valise. But in good time I had taken to the streets of Split, dragging my famous suitcase with me, looking for shelter. No sooner had I found one than here too German troops marched in. Trapped again, I did not leave this shelter for a month; but when I did venture out of the house a miracle happened: I ran smack into the very man who, two years earlier, had smuggled me from Zagreb to Split. Once again he had planned an escape route and, together with his bride, he helped me to get out of the town. It was she who carried my valise through the German lines. All I carried was a string bag with bottles of milk. This girl, however, seemed on excellent terms with all soldiery, and thus I reached the guerilla territory in the woods outside Split.

There followed months of wandering through the wild mountains, with the Germans driving us—fighting Partisans and refugees—farther and farther south. Some of us escaped in small boats through waters infested with swift German patrol boats. I held on to my suitcase. In moments of acute danger, I held it overboard, ready to drop it into the water.

Thus, at Christmas 1943, I reached the island of Vis, a Yugoslav island near the coast of southern Italy. The Germans frequently bombed this outpost, but it remained the one Dalmatian island which they never captured. Vis became the headquarters of the Partisans, and Churchill sent a military mission to this island. All civilians were now evacuated, and only fighting personnel were allowed to remain. A small vessel built to take 300 carried 1,500 civilians to the liberated part of southern Italy. But nobody was allowed to take any luggage, and there could be no thought of taking the heavy suitcase full of documents. I concealed my treasure in a wine-cellar, in the care of a woman friend who was to stay behind.

We crossed the remaining part of the Adriatic. During our two-day voyage, Stukas bombarded us, but, though boats in front and behind us were sunk, we got through! Southern Italy had been liberated. One could breathe again. Yes, but what about my research material back in that cellar on Vis? What if the Yugoslav headquarters were transferred to southern Italy and the island left to the Germans? That had been the fate of all other islands. Or what if somebody stumbled on my suitcase? We were at a critical point of the war. Nobody was likely to believe that all this was only scientific notes about the domestic way of life of peasant folk. A thousand sheets of text complete with maps and tables or figures? It would certainly

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provoke suspicion! I mentioned the matter to Partisans and British officers, going back to Vis, but they would not think of taking even a letter either way—they were not going to risk a firing squad! Partisan courts were not given to dilly-dallying. Nobody would waste time investigating the truth of such a fantastic story.

Then came the first UNRRA mission, flown in from Cairo. Among the UNRRA people was a marvelous Canadian girl, a social welfare worker who knew little of war or spy mania and seemed never to have heard of such things as courts martial. She listened to my tale of woe and promised to bring me back my suitcase. She was going across to Vis anyway, she said. For her it was as simple as that! And so it was. Three weeks later, there among her smart luggage, was my battered suitcase, and not one scrap of my precious papers missing, either. When I flung my arms round her neck, she was actually surprised. What was there so wonderful about bringing someone her suitcase?

For a year, Bari, where I was staying, served as a base from which a break-through northward was prepared, and the Germans took care to bombard us. All day long there were crowds of soldiers and civilians staring at the beflagged maps in the window of the British Information Office. Those little flags never seemed to move. In North Africa the Germans were falling back as they did in the East. But nothing changed on the Italian front. Meanwhile, however, I was able to go on completing my material. For south Italy was full of Yugoslav peasants—fighters and refugees. Cross-examining them was a sort of check on my earlier researches. Were these folk going to behave abroad, in wartime, as my studies showed? Would they remain true to the styles I had found when they were still welded in the framework of the family?

The war was still not over when a doctor friend of mine drove through Yugoslavia from Split to Belgrade. When he came back his words were: "The whole way through I did not see a single house in a single village with its roof on." Only when I heard that did I realize what it was that I had brought out of the war. It was the last picture of a foundering ship; the last record of the patriarchal social system which was about to crumble. After four years of enemy occupation and resistance warfare, there could now be left only fragmentary traces of the patriarchal life.

I now realized that the tense excitement I had shared with my team in those days on the eve of war had been a foreboding of what was fated to happen. However we succeeded in saving a great part

## *PREFACE*

of our material, and, through a series of miracles, I had been able to take it with me. But most of those who had provided me with my answers had given their lives in resistance fighting. To all those dear friends who thus in the eleventh hour helped me to prepare these records of the age in which we had lived, an age fated to vanish—to them, to those who perished and those who survived, I dedicate this book.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many persons from two continents were in some way responsible for my undertaking and completing this study.

The first stimulation came from three Bosnian students: Muralem Ljubović, Sulejman Azabagić, and Muhamed Dusić (now all professional men in Bosnia) with their passionate request that I begin the struggle for the emancipation of the Moslem women. Soon teachers from various regions joined them and persuaded me to embrace the whole country in my investigation. They became my indefatigable investigators. The teachers were organized by Dragutin Franković and the late Franjo Marinić. A young student, Maya Schwarz, accompanied me during my field work as devoted friend and assistant (she is now a noted architect, Mrs. Henry Gottlieb, in Denver, Colorado).

From the beginning, I received strong support from Dr. Rudolf Bićanić, then connected with the Peasant Party, now Professor of Zagreb University. He offered me data, figures, and maps, and his own ample experience. His revealing interpretation, full of humor, of my first statistical tables induced me to carry on with statistical work. Professor Bogdan Teodorović offered me in a most helpful way much material on health statistics.

The Law Faculty of Belgrade University gave me further support. Their Dean, the late Professor Gjorgje Tasić (killed by the occupation forces), invited me to Belgrade to present the first reports of my survey at the University. Assistant Svetislav Božović-Čabo organized excursions into the Serbian countryside, and he has been an ardent supporter of my survey ever since. The young Professor Jovan Gjorgević was also very helpful, as were three other prominent professors, from each of whom I learned a great deal: Professor Slobodan Jovanović, Serbian history; Professor Dragoljub Jovanović, rural sociology and a thorough knowledge of all aspects of Serbian peasant life; Professor Sreten Vukosavljević, ethnology. When Sreten spoke to the peasants on our excursions, he was for me the living example of patriarchal authority with the democratic element in it.

In the Shumadia area of Serbia, Mrs. Bulka Josifović was my leader, in Herzegovina, Dr. Lovro Dojmić of Delupis of Mostar. Dr. Isak Samokovlija in Sarajevo opened my eyes to the nervous disposition of the Bosnian peasant; Dr. Mićo Branislavljević of Jajce told me about the problems of maternity; Judge Samuel Kamhi discussed with me the law problems, and he also let me hear the beautiful folk

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

songs of Bosnia. In the mountains around Sarajevo, Ilija Grbić (killed in the resistance fighting) and his wife Vukica, both young teachers in the village of Romania Mountain, were my hosts. All the warmth and affection of Bosnians were mirrored in the peasants' eyes when I came with their beloved teachers to visit their homes.

In the dark days of refugee life in Dalmatia, my friend Dr. Filip Reiner encouraged me to carry on with my work until the day he was captured.

I was introduced to statistical work by Professor Maria Jahoda of Vienna, today in London, formerly Director of the Institute for Human Relations at the New York University and author of a well known textbook on social research. A few days before the "Anschluss" in 1938, and her own emigration, she gave me precious advice and recommended a statistician to work with me. Later on, in the United States, Professor Jahoda offered me help and constructive criticism. The friend she sent to me was Dr. Theo Neumann of Vienna, who came to Zagreb to work with me on the survey material for many months. His zeal and devotion for this work helped me to overcome my fatigue from endless counting without machine. Without Dr. Neumann, I would not have been able to complete the tables in the shadow of the threatening German attack, and I could never make this up since the original questionnaires were lost during the German occupation.

I had no opportunity to thank the two young Naval officers who risked carrying my material through guarded frontiers. Only recently did I discover their names: Jan Žižkov and Velimir Škorpik; but I could not find them. I have been able, however, to thank Mr. Mate Crnić and Mara Crnić, who had hidden part of my material for years and kept it under the most difficult circumstances. My gratitude extends also to Mr. Josef Fischer, who performed what was almost a miracle in saving my material in a dangerous moment. Thanks to Dr. Iruda Borković and Mrs. Vera Miše-Gavella for keeping my material in the darkest war days.

When I came back to Yugoslavia after nearly twenty years, I found a great interest in and assistance with the rescued material. Dr. Ljuba Vuković of Belgrade watched in a most devoted way over the manuscript. Dr. Milenko S. Filipović, professor of ethnology at Sarajevo and Belgrade, gave me the most cordial advice, offered his constructive criticism, and recommended the study for publication. Professor Rudi Supek, Zagreb University, made successful efforts for publication of the study, as did Mrs. Nada Sremec and Mrs. Anica Magašić.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Their attitude toward this study made it possible to publish the book in Yugoslavia in memory of the many collaborators who were killed in the Resistance.

When I arrived in the United States, two old friends, Mr. Alfred Bondy and Mr. Paul Neuberger, helped me actively, enabling me to prepare reports and applications to scholarly foundations for assistance to complete the work. It was a long time before I obtained help, as I had to apply to forty-three foundations before I received a favorable answer.

My project was accepted by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. Its director, Dr. Paul Fejos, provided me with a considerable grant, which made it possible to devote myself to research and writing. Dr. Fejos' and the foundation's generosity was great indeed, even greater since I had no American degrees nor recommendations. Although my presentation of the project was by no means in perfect English, Dr. Fejos evaluated my material as precious and considered the potential contribution of my study as high for anthropology in general. I received an unconditional grant. Dr. Fejos' authority has been also of great help for my academic career.

At the University of California in Berkeley, two famous anthropologists received me with open arms: The late Professors A. L. Kroeber and Robert H. Lowie. Besides teaching at the Slavic Language Department, I became a research fellow at the Department of Anthropology and had the privilege of discussing in detail my material with both professors; I am unable to express my gratitude to these generous scholars. Also their younger colleagues were helpful to me, Professors George Foster, David Mandelbaum, and sociologist Wolfram Eberhard. Mr. Max Knight, editor of the California University Press, was my untiring tutor in organizing the material. Professor Irwin T. Sanders, New York, read my book in the Serbo-Croatian edition, evaluated and reviewed it, and helped me greatly in my efforts to prepare an American edition, as did Professor Reuben Hill of Minnesota in a most kind and generous way.

If this book contributes somehow to the understanding of man, much of the merit goes to the many unselfish persons who helped me to collect, save, present, and publish the survey material.

#### ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

The late Alec Brown translated half of this study; that is Chapters II, III, IV, V, VI, VIII, X, and XI; I translated the other half.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Mr. Brown, a well-known British author and translator, was an expert in Serbo-Croatian and knew the Yugoslav country intimately. His study *Yugoslav Land and Landscape*, published by Elek Books (London and New York, 1954), can be considered one of the best books on the subject. A distinguished graduate of St. John's College Cambridge, Alec Brown was a Slavonic scholar, with many translations from Serbian and Russian, as well as from French and German, to his credit. He was decorated in 1931 by the Yugoslav Government for his archaeological researches in that country. In the United States, several of his books were published in the inter-war years, including *Beethoven Deaf and other Poems* (Dial Press) and *Daughters of Albion* (Doubleday, Doran and Company).

#### ABOUT THE PICTURES

The photographs included in this book show people from different regions, with the bearing, gestures, and costumes of the patriarchal era. The pictures are documents of a bygone time, since these costumes and also partly the expressions of the people have disappeared to a great extent in most parts of Yugoslavia. Like the reports of my interviewers, the pictures caught their subjects at the very last moment, before the storms of history spoiled their style. Their beauty, grown through centuries, disappeared in a few years under the blows of enemy occupation and fighting during the Second World War and the onrush of the machine era.

Acknowledgement is made to the following for the use of copyrighted photographs: to Mr. Toso Davac, Zagreb, for Nos. 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 27, 27; to Mr. Mladen Grčević, Zagreb, for Nos. 6, 12, 17, 21, 25, 28, 30, 31, 32.





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## FAMILY IN TRANSITION

## NOTE ON PRONUNCIATION

C is always read and pronounced as *ts* in *bits*, *gets*.

Č and Ć are pronounced like *ch* in *child*, with a slight difference in the pronunciation between them.

Š is pronounced as *sh* in *ship*.

Ž is pronounced as in *pleasure*.

Dj and Dž (with a slight difference between them) are pronounced as *j* in *just*.

j is always pronounced as *y* in *yet*.

Other letters are pronounced approximately as in English.

## Introduction



### *Problems and Goals*

WHEN I began this survey in 1937, my object was to study relations in the Yugoslav family and the changes which showed themselves so dramatically during the interwar period when the whole complex of traditional customs, normed attitudes, and automatic reactions began to disintegrate at a quick pace. Though at that time the patriarchal regime was still intact in part of the country, over large areas it was only a memory, although a very lively one, since the older generation had grown up within its framework. My attempt to discover the reasons for the great changes was facilitated by the fact that the entire life of the villages was still going on, on the more or less even basis of a subsistence economy. I searched for historical reasons for the great differences among the various regions, inquiring especially into the impact of cultural influence from outside. The adjustment of the social pattern to the penetrating money economy came to be central to my study.

My point of departure was more socio-psychological than ethnological. I concentrated on problems of authority, conflicts, rivalries, love and hate, groupings, rank and position in the family, as well as on the process of transformation of all family relations. As I felt that the ethnological data had already been studied thoroughly and a very considerable literature on them published in Serbo-Croatian, I devoted less care to traditional customs and folklore.

When I finished the survey in 1941, the world collapsed—for Europe, for the Yugoslav villages, and for me personally. The rescued survey material became historical documents, irretrievable indices of a perished world. I myself, thrown out of my home and my native land, spent nearly twenty years in different countries. This catastrophe, however, gave new possibilities for comparison as well as a new background for the old material.

I had the opportunity to deal with people in refugee camps, catapulted from their burned villages, isolated from their families, and evacuated to foreign lands. As a social worker, I was in charge of thousands of young people who had survived German concentration camps, many of whom were the only ones left from big families or even entire towns. I observed how they gradually came back to life as they attempted to found new families, and how they built up



## INTRODUCTION

family affections from scratch, showing the irresistible need for family living with or without an interrupted condition.

In sharp contrast to these scenes, I saw two settings with stable and warm family relations on traditional lines and with strong emotional coloring: Italy and Mexico. There the friction between the sexes seemed small and the conflicts between generations still smaller, as if these countries had remained untouched by the historical storms of our time.

I learned to know the most highly urbanized and industrialized country—the United States, connected and adjusted to a machine-science society with family relations very different from those in the Slavic South or in the Romance countries. My American experience gave a new perspective to some of my first findings. I found many tendencies, only surmised in the Yugoslav villages, developed to an extreme in the form of “ideal types” in the United States.

A quarter of a century between the beginning and the completion of this study, and experience in several settings, have changed somewhat its accent, without changing its objective and goals.

The Yugoslav rural family on the eve of the Second World War, and the changes that were taking place in it, remained the primary task; general conclusions drawn from this material came second. The Yugoslav family became in a certain sense an example for the demonstration of certain general themes and theories. Elements which are common to all people and not only to those of rural Yugoslavia came into the focus of my research, for example the complementary play of individualistic and collectivistic tendencies, the readiness for adjustment as well as for resistance, the longing for security as well as for independence, the general need for family living, and the riddle of culture contact.

## CHAPTER I

### Historical Background

YUGOSLAVIA presents many riddles to the observer—its wavering between East and West being probably the most intriguing one.

Anyone who visited Yugoslavia between the two wars would remember its contrasts and its quality of oscillation; it was East and West; simultaneously traditional and modern. The northern cities reminded one of the Habsburg Monarchy; Bosnia, however, was definitely Oriental. On the Adriatic littoral, San Marco's winged lion recalled memories of the Venetian Republic and the songs of Italy. In the Dinaric Alps near the coast, one might have imagined oneself among the knights and crusaders in the Middle East: People spoke of Sultan Murat as though he had just invaded Europe and endangered Christendom.

The country was backward and progressive, and both to an extreme extent. One could travel from Paris to Constantinople across Yugoslavia on the fashionable Orient Express. But by getting off at a Yugoslav station and walking a few hours into the Bosnian mountains, one would find oneself in a remote archaic epoch, where burdens were carried on the backs of pack animals or people. The markets looked like Indian markets in Latin America, with peasants standing or squatting before baskets full of colorful fruits, vegetables, and poultry. They were clad in handwoven embroidered costumes and sandals. However, in conversation with peasants, let us say, from the Shumadia district of Serbia, one would hear sharp and independent comments on world politics.

In intimate and family relationships the contrasts were equally great. Love relations were based on deep passion. Suicide and death because of the loss of a loved one and a "broken heart" were not rare among peasants. South Slav love songs were unequalled in beauty. Yet the ascetic trend, too, was stronger here than elsewhere: During the resistance fighting in the Second World War, the Partisans punished love affairs by death.

For an understanding of any aspect of Yugoslav life, one needs some knowledge of historical background; without it, many phenomena cannot be understood at all. This is true of the Yugoslav resistance to occupation, or Tito's break with Stalin, as well as of

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relationships within the family. The goals which guided these people, the values which determined their behavior have a political-historical mark.

The main reason for this may be geographical as the country is located on the Balkan peninsula at the gate of Asia. The peninsula is a bridge between Europe and Asia with many roads leading to it and through it. The Balkans are unprotected, there is no impediment to entering them, no mountain barrier separates them from the continent such as exists in the north of the other south European peninsulas. The Balkans are linked so intimately to the continent by the Danube and its tributaries that Yugoslavia might be considered as part of Central Europe, or else Hungary as a part of the Balkans. The gentle Adriatic with its many islands creates a close connection with the West.

This position has tempted many powers to invade and attempt to seize the Balkans. Such attempts to conquer or win over the South Slavs are by no means new. Soon after their arrival in the Balkans (in the sixth and seventh centuries), they found themselves between the eastern and the western church centers of the disintegrating Roman Empire. There were always several neighbors claiming the Balkans, and every power had to fight rivals. Yet the fights seldom brought decisive victories, the frontier between great powers and spheres of influence ran mostly across the middle of the peninsula.

These many temptations, threats, and invasions had a curious result: The South Slavs were never compelled to submit unconditionally to a given situation; they never had to conform to a penetrating force. There were always other alternatives; it was always possible to resist and become the ally of another power. Always they could—and therefore had to—make far-reaching political decisions. This caused the political element in the culture to become dominant, much more important than such others as economics. The historical or political element has dominated all areas of life, including family relations. It is also the reason that I have devoted more space to the historical background than may seem warranted at first glance.

#### *Five Hundred Years of Ottoman Empire*

When the Slavs migrating to the South reached the Balkan Peninsula, they had penetrated to the core of European culture and civilization, to Byzantium, the East-Roman Empire. Only when the Byzantine Empire was weakened did the South Slavs attempt to establish their own states. Croats and Bulgarians, Serbs and Bosnians

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The Balkans between the two World Wars

founded more or less independent states, which grew rapidly but were quickly supplanted by others. In the fourteenth century, a Serbian prince succeeded in building up the Serbian state to a great power, of which Macedonia was the center, and became Emperor as Czar Dushan. The glory of this period, sung in many folk epics, was never forgotten. After Dushan's death, his empire disintegrated into several princedoms, only loosely connected.

At that time the Ottomans<sup>1</sup> had begun their victorious drive toward the west. Their founders were shepherds of the Arabic desert, well organized and modest as to their personal needs, with the outstanding discipline and intelligence of many nomads. During the

<sup>1</sup> The Ottoman Empire (called after its founder, Sultan Osman) included many nations. The most influential one was Turkey. During the existence of the Empire, the names "Turks" and "Ottomans" were used interchangeably, but the state was mostly called "Ottoman Empire" or "Osman Empire."

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Middle Ages, several nomadic peoples from the steppes had invaded Europe and had proved invincible wherever they attacked sedentary populations. The Ottomans, too, had overcome all resistance in Asia. In the fourteenth century, when they reached the Balkan Peninsula and won their first battle, the Serbian princes united in order to resist. A decisive battle was fought on Kosovo Plain in 1389. The Serbs were defeated, their commander King Lazar fell, as did most of the other princes and knights. Sultan Murad was also killed. The surviving Serbian princes became Turkish vassals and disappeared a few decades later. In this period the Turks conquered Constantinople, the Croatian territories, and Hungary. They advanced to Vienna, where the wave was broken in the early sixteenth century. Parts of Central Europe became Turkish for one and a half centuries, but the Balkans remained under the Turkish rule for half a millennium.

While all other nomadic peoples had disappeared or were absorbed by the sedentary populations after one generation, the Ottomans, with their unique organization, remained for many centuries. This is probably due to the fact that desert nomads had penetrated to the heart of European culture. The Ottoman striking force and gift for organization blended with Byzantine order, law, technique, and culture, resulting in the creation of the great Ottoman Empire of the early period. The state was a Utopia, an idea consistently reiterated. It was of such perfection that it fascinated the Europeans and easily absorbed the conquered nations. Even the Balkan Slavs did not rise to resistance until much later.

The system was built up in the tradition and in accordance with the experience of desert shepherds (as Toynbee formulates it). The hierarchy was a steep structure, the Sultan being military commander, head of the church, and unlimited lord over life and death. The people were looked upon as cattle, and called *raya*, meaning cattle. Cattle and *raya* had to deliver products, but otherwise were left alone, and no attempts were made to change or reform them. Only if they broke loose or revolted, would they be killed. The *raya* were kept in check by a special caste comparable to watchdogs. The officers and functionaries of the state were not free men, but the Sultan's slaves.

The South Slavs (except the Islamized ones) became a homogeneous people, since the nobility disappeared and the priests became peasant-like. The peasants were in a much better position than those in the European feudal system. They were not obliged

to perform personal services. They had only to deliver part of their agricultural yields to the Moslem lords, and only the *Spahis* had the obligation for military service (as cavalry). In Austria this system was considered so favorable for the peasantry that special privileges were established for the Austrian frontier soldiers in order to give them living conditions similar to those enjoyed by the peasants on the other side of the Turkish frontier.

All Ottoman state officers were slaves, according to the principle that children and men do well only when they are completely dependent on their educators and commanders. No free Moslem could become an officer, and sons of officers were equally excluded. Only drafted Christian children, prisoners of war, and kidnapped slaves could become civil servants. They were taken to Constantinople and thoroughly trained in schools and military institutes. The most gifted ones went to academies or were made pages in the Serail, the Sultan's residence. After completing their studies, they were sent to high administrative positions. Many military commanders and *vezirs*—chief ministers—were Balkan Slavs, and the best troops of the Empire, the Janissaries, were drafted Christian boys from the Balkans. Their position and the name of the slaves—*kul*—was an honor, as they were “in His Majesty's service.”

In this system, one democratic principle had become evident: Only the individual qualities counted, regardless of the national, religious, racial, or class background of the boys. This was the extreme opposite of the contemporary European notion of social strata. But the success of the system in the Ottoman Empire was so obvious that European observers considered it a miracle. These slaves had unlimited opportunities, yet they were completely exposed to the will of the Sultan. Since they were considered to be something like watchdogs, any moment could bring them the death sentence; every failure, the slightest suspicion could cost them their heads. Their power and glory stood always under the shadow of fear.

The leading goal of the Ottoman state was missionary: The world had to be conquered for Islam. Accordingly, officers had to be Moslems, and the students and cadets were Islamized; as they stood under the suggestion of the power of Islam, they did it voluntarily. The *raya*, however, were left undisturbed in their customs and their religion. Every national or religious community—*Millet*—was represented by its priests. The state was a supra-national compound of many nationalities and religions.

The Ottoman system made one fateful mistake: It did not take

human nature into account. Officers would not accept the verdict to be poisoned like watchdogs with real resignation; nor in the long run would the *raya* accept, without resistance, their position and their lowly name. From the start many institutions carried the germ of the ultimate fall of the state.

One example of this disregard of human nature was the children's levy, known as the "tax in blood." Every fourth year the sons of the Balkan *raya* were drafted. The strongest, most handsome and gifted boys, ranging in age from nine to twelve, were taken from their parents and included in the Sultan's slave household. These children had excellent opportunities for career, so good, in fact, that some Moslem parents cheated to have their sons included. Nevertheless, this tax in blood was one reason for the unreconcilable hatred of the South Slavs against the state. Although this institution was abandoned at the end of the seventeenth century, the South Slavs could never forget it, and nowadays one can still hear talk about it as the height of brutality.

The whole system was inflexible and not suited to reforms. After about two hundred fifty years of unparalleled rise, the gradual decline of the Empire began, lasting for about an equally long period. Starting with the second defeat of the Turks before Vienna at the end of the seventeenth century, the military advantages of the European countries became evident. The formerly progressive Turkish organization had become backward. The military failures had a reciprocal effect on the decline of the administration. The defeats meant burdens on the treasury; corruption and disorder spread. The whole system of the Sultan's slaves became undermined: The officers succeeded in having their sons and grandsons accepted for state service. The Spahis, who had received their estates as feudal tenure for military service, succeeded in establishing the heredity of these estates. The Janissaries deteriorated to privileged bands, to which membership could be bought. *Bakshish*—tip and bribe—became part of the system. Injustice and insecurity became general. Nothing remained of the brilliant organization which had ruled over large parts of three continents. The *raya*, exposed to violence, became enemies of the state.

Migrations within the state, which had started shortly after the Ottoman invasion, acquired political features partly hostile to the state. From the central regions and the major military roads, many peasants had migrated to more sheltered regions. This was a selective process, as the belligerent elements moved to the impassable moun-

tains in order to be far from the reach of the Turkish lords, more peaceful elements or those friendly to the Turks migrated to the valleys, where life was easier. In the Dinaric Alps near the Adriatic, the attitude of the people became more and more unyielding. Bands of *hayduks* gathered, attacking and robbing the Turks.

In the course of the wars between the Ottoman and the Austrian Empires, another migratory movement developed—that toward Austria. Whenever the Austrian armies penetrated the Balkans, the *raya* collaborated with them; when the armies retreated, a large part of the population joined them to escape from the Turkish revenge. In 1698, when Austria withdrew her occupation army from Macedonia, 40,000 families, led by the Orthodox Patriarch, joined the army and went to Austria. They were resettled at the Austrian southern border as had been many other waves of refugees before and after this event.

The defeat on the Kosovo Plain became a legend which nurtured the idea of revenge. The names of the heroes of Kosovo lived on in the daily talk of the people. The goal of the men became to fight for the “venerable cross and the golden freedom.” The epics of the death of the Serbian princes acquired religious features and received the support of the Orthodox Church. The day of the catastrophe of Kosovo, the St. Vitus’ Day—*Vidovdan*—became a day of remembrance.

The Orthodox Church had become the intermediary between the Balkan Slavs and the European powers. In many places the priests were the only literate people. Also, the defense of Christendom was the only legitimate motive for asking assistance from European powers, as the national idea was not yet acknowledged. When Russia became the protector of the Balkan Slavs in the eighteenth century, it was believed that Russia helped her smaller brothers because she belonged to the Orthodox Church. Only later did the national motive appear, and national aims were frankly pursued.

The great antagonist of the Ottoman Empire was Austria. In the heart of Europe, the Habsburgs had organized the struggle against the Turks. Before Vienna, two waves of Turkish attacks were broken. It was here that the Turks had to resign their hope of conquering the whole world. Austria’s large South Slav population was incessantly engaged in the struggle against the Turks.

In the eighteenth century, the central Ottoman power was weakened so much that the Balkan regions were ruled by usurpers and bandits who made cities and roads insecure and refused to obey



the Sultan. The Janissaries, formerly the best Turkish infantry, by then was a band of gangsters and robbers which several times threatened even Constantinople. Sultan Selim attempted to establish law and security, proclaimed reforms, and tried to get rid of the Janissaries. The leaders of the Janissaries, called *Dahis*, were especially aggressive in the Belgrade Pashaluk. The Pasha of Belgrade, in order to enable the Serbs to defend themselves against the Janissaries, distributed arms. This action had fateful consequences. The Serbs used the arms as it suited their own needs and desires.

Serbia, for centuries a battlefield between the fighting Empires, became depopulated. Then in relatively calm periods of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a large immigration began into this scarcely populated region. Most of the immigrants were belligerent people, determined to revenge Kosovo. A forest district—Shumadia—not too far from the Austrian border, not too near the great military roads, became the center of resistance. For a long time the administration there was almost completely in the hands of village headmen—the *knez'*—and Turks were found only in the cities. When in 1804 the Dahis started a massacre among the village *knez'*, the people revolted. Led by Kara-George, the Serbs defeated the Janissaries and declared their independence from the Ottoman Empire.

When Napoleon attacked Russia, Serbian independence suffered some setbacks, but in 1815 a second revolt flared up. In the subsequent years, the link with the Ottoman Empire became increasingly looser until the last Turkish garrisons left in 1867. In the beginning of the seventies, in connection with the upheaval in Herzegovina (another South Slav region under Turkish rule), war broke out against the Turks. Russia helped the Balkan Slavs, and Bulgaria was freed by the Russians. Serbia, however, gained little, and did not reach its goal of acquiring Bosnia and Herzegovina. The European powers, anxious to keep an equilibrium, did not want Russia to become too strong with the support of all the newly liberated Balkan Slavs. An international conference was called—the Berlin Congress of 1878—to solve the "Oriental question." According to its decisions, the Balkan states became sovereign, but Bosnia and Herzegovina became Austrian provinces, and were occupied by the Austrian army.

The national ambitions of the Balkan Slavs grew stronger. In 1912 the Balkan War broke out. Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Greece allied to fight against the Turks, and the war ended in total Turkish defeat. Immediately following, war broke out between two of the allies: Serbia and Bulgaria, who fought over the division of the

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newly won Macedonia. Serbia won and received nearly the whole of northern Macedonia. Southern Macedonia, with Salonika, became Greek.

Turkey retained only a small territory in Europe including Constantinople and the Dardanelles. This was the end of the Ottoman era and of Turkish rule in the Balkans. The Ottoman state, which had once stormed over Europe like a young giant, perished as the "sick man on the Bosphorus," the "giant with the feet of clay."

Many South Slav features still reflected Oriental influence. Among the consequences of the decline of Ottoman rule were economic backwardness, the low standard of living, and a conservatism which served as a brake on technical progress. But, in the calm of the villages, a folk culture of extraordinary beauty had grown up, and even the Oriental philosophy of life was embraced by the peasants.

A set of very different features, characteristic of the freedom-loving highlanders, was also a consequence of the long Turkish domination of the Balkans. These features by themselves are by no means Oriental, but they emerged under the Ottoman system and the position of the *raya* in it, which was felt as a provocation. The resistance of the South Slavs had produced a democratic spirit and political experience within the declining Ottoman state. (Both these styles of life which developed under Oriental influence are discussed in detail in the chapter "The Riddle of Culture Contact.")

#### *Five Hundred Years of Habsburg Monarchy*

Long before the Ottomans attacked Europe, the Habsburgs had been one of Europe's leading dynasties, and most western countries belonged to their crown in different periods. (One Habsburg king could say that in his kingdom the sun never set.) It was through resistance to Ottoman aggression that Austria itself, located in the heart of the continent, became a great power. The Habsburgs organized the fighting against the Turks, uniting the Danube area for defense. The two waves of Ottoman advance which were broken before Vienna destroyed Turkish hopes of conquering the world for Islam.

When in 1526 the Turks pushed up to the center of Europe, Ferdinand of Habsburg was chosen as King of Hungary and Croatia, or rather of the remnants of these countries which had not been conquered. Great parts of them had fallen to the Turks and remained for one hundred fifty years under Turkish rule. The Ottoman Empire had become the neighbor of Austria and threatened

its borders for centuries. For half a millennium Austria kept the lead in the fighting.

While one-half of the South Slavs came under Turkish domination and after that lived inside the Ottoman Empire (or in permanent resistance fighting against it), the other half became Austrian. From this time, two very different cultures—the Oriental and the Central European—influenced the South Slavs. Both empires were among the greatest powers of their time, and some elements were common to both: The imperial claim, the stability of the state for half a millennium, and the unceasing fight against each other. But the principles and practices of these two rival states were entirely different, and thus the South Slavs on both sides of the frontier came under very distinct cultural influences. The resulting contrasts were much greater than any common trends.

The fundamental principle of the Habsburg state was contrary to the Ottoman one. The Ottoman state was based on the right of conquest: All territories were conquered in religious wars. The Sultan, at the same time Kalif and Allah's substitute on earth, was lord over life and death; the people were without power. Absolute obedience to the Sultan was the supreme law. The result was either a fatalistic and passive attitude among the raya or else the other extreme, daring and death-defying rebellion.

Austria was founded under different circumstances—she was born “under another constellation.” In the course of time the Habsburgs acquired lands by means of inheritance, dowry, treaties, and election. Consequently every part of the Austrian Empire had a particular position within the state. Every region, every province had different claims, different guaranteed rights for which they fought within a constitutional framework. Relativity had been raised to a principle; the right to struggle for one's position was basically never denied. In Croatia too, the Habsburgs had become rulers by election. After Hungary and Croatia were defeated by the Turks in the decisive battle of Mohacz in 1526, the Austrian emperor was elected as their king. Large parts of Hungary and Croatia, however, remained Turkish for one hundred fifty years.

Over the Austrian border, wave after wave of refugees from the Turkish territories streamed in, carrying with them their hatred of the Turks, their fighting spirit, and the Kosovo tradition. With a special statute, the Austrian border area was organized as a military frontier—the Military March—against the Ottoman neighbor. It included a big part of Croatia. In the Military March, every-

thing stood under military command; men, women, and children were military personnel. The "frontier men," not having feudal status, were under the direct jurisdiction of the Emperor. They appreciated these privileges and were loyal to their adopted state. Although the Austrian command was strictly authoritarian, the refugees had no conflict with it, and became, despite—or because of—their fighting spirit, the best Austrian soldiers. Many Austrian commanders-in-chief and many generals, even as late as the First World War, had been peasant sons from the Military March. This area remained under the special statute until the end of the nineteenth century, until the occupation of Bosnia.

The Austrian rule of five hundred years was interrupted only for a short time by Napoleon's creation, the Illyrian Kingdom, including all Austrian (and Venetian) regions with South Slav populations. After Napoleon's fall, Dalmatia at the Adriatic, which formerly had been under Venetian domination, became Austrian too. Stimulated by Napoleon, a South Slav national movement developed in Croatia and Dalmatia. Its goals were not revolutionary, however, like those of the Serbian freedom fighters but rather cultural. Only very slowly and gradually the national ideals of Croats and Serbs came closer to each other, and a mutual contact was established.

The Austrian occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878 was a terrible blow to Serbia, which had claimed these provinces. When Austria finally annexed the provinces in 1908, a war with Serbia seemed imminent. The South Slavs in the Monarchy sympathized with free Serbia and began to identify their own goals with those of their "Serbian brothers."

In Central Europe, nationalism became irresistible. Most active among the Austrian Slavs were the Czechs under the leadership of Thomas G. Masaryk. The Italians had an *Irredenta* movement longing to be incorporated into Italy, and the Hungarians claimed still more autonomy than they already possessed within the Monarchy. Like the discontented *raya*, people first struggled only for greater independence from the Austrian central power without planning to blow up the Empire. Yet fate did not favor such a solution: Crown Prince Rudolf and Archduke Franz Ferdinand, who might have helped a federal Austria to come true, were given no opportunity; old Franz Joseph remained Emperor for sixty-eight years, and both heirs to the throne died before he did.

The hostility to the state of the various peoples within the Austrian Empire grew stronger. Nationalistic feelings became extreme,

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bitter struggles developed over language trifles such as the name of a railway station, a military command, or the lettering on a postage stamp. In reality, the pressure inside the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was not especially strong if compared to later developments in Central Europe. Austria was economically and technically progressive, with a law-abiding bureaucracy, with an administration unmatched in that part of the world. But the people did not judge these matters dispassionately, and many felt imprisoned. At least a considerable part of the students and the intelligentsia of the Slav regions felt this way.

In June 1914, maneuvers were held in Bosnia. The Archduke Franz Ferdinand visited Sarajevo on "Vidovdan," the St. Vitus' Day, the mourning feast commemorating the battle of Kosovo. The Serbian nationalistic youth considered this visit and the whole maneuvers as a provocation, and their answer was his assassination; the Austrian heir to the throne and his wife were shot. As Austria supposed that the assassination had been prepared in Serbia, it declared war on Serbia. The First World War began.

After four and a half years, the Central Powers including Austria were defeated by the Allies. The South Slavs from the Monarchy had fought as Austrian soldiers but, toward the end of the war, deserted in masses to the forests. In London a South Slav committee had prepared the foundation of a new state. When defeated Austria fell to pieces in October 1918, the Austrian South Slav regions united with Serbia and Montenegro into a common state.

Austria had grown in the struggle against the Turks. Her *raison d'être* had been unification of Central Europe in order to defend Europe against Ottoman aggression. This goal was reached after centuries of struggle. When, however, in these fights the young South Slav peoples grew strong and wrecked the Ottoman Empire, the hour of death had arrived also for its antagonist—the Austrian Empire. For more than five hundred years, the two empires had lived as hostile neighbors; almost to the end they had fought each other, and they died at the same hour, both by the hand of their own children.

Yet, just as their births, their deaths too were different. While the Ottoman Empire lost one province after another and, in a long-lasting disintegrating illness, became the caricature of its own former greatness, Austria perished apparently in full health, with a perfect administration and nearly unbroken military power. The same Slav peoples, in some cases the same persons, destroyed the Turkish as

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well as the Austrian Empire. In both cases, Slav nationalism triumphed over a multinational state.

Like the South Slavs in the Ottoman Empire, those in the Habsburg Empire had acquired distinct features. While the absolute demands in the Ottoman state drove the Slavs to rebellion, in Austria, due to its flexible constitution, they were brought to conformity. Here the centers of the state were located in economically more highly developed regions than the areas where the South Slavs lived. Therefore, in Austria, everything coming from the state was technically, scientifically, and administratively progressive. People belonged to a stabilized great power with legal security and good administration, and this was the background for life also for the peasantry—including family relations. Austrian order and authority were the reasons that aggressive trends were pushed into the background, at least for the time being.

Like most great cultures, the Austrian had grown out of a fusion of different elements (German, Hungarian, Italian, Rumanian, and Slav peoples all contributed to the making of their empire). Out of all these components a whole developed in which the parts blended perfectly as in a chemical compound.

The specific style of life that grew up in the Austrian Empire lasted much longer than the state under which it had arisen. People from what were once Austrian regions still reveal their extraction in innumerable details, in bearing, attitude, and speech habits, as people from other Yugoslav regions with a different cultural heritage sense keenly.

Notes from my diary of 1940 from Bosnia show how people remembered Austria twenty-two years after its death: "From all talks with the peasants, a nostalgia for old times can be heard. It is strange that the Moslems, the Catholics, and the Orthodox speak in just the same way, constantly comparing the present with the old Austrian days. I heard the same words repeated in peasant homes and backyards, at the markets, around the courtrooms and hospitals in Banjaluka, Jajce, Visoko, the villages on Romania Mountain. How much easier it was to live before—how everything was according to rule—how wonderful it would be if things would be done as before and not forever left pending. My companions with whom I visited the villages were silent. How could they oppose this reasoning when it was they who had undermined old Austria. But when we were alone my friends, considering taxes, legal courts, schooling, actions taken against malaria and for the maintenance of the roads, the to-

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bacco monopoly, would admit to me '... unfortunately it is not being done right. People would be happy, believe us, happy and satisfied if the administration were just and in order, even if there were not more bread to eat. . . .'

#### *The First Twenty-Two Years of Yugoslavia*

With the creation of the Yugoslav state, East and West met. Eastern and Western influences were revealed by the religious affiliations of the people.<sup>2</sup> The Serbian-Orthodox part of the population (48.5 per cent of the total) and the Moslems (11.5 per cent) belonged to Eastern faiths. Western influence was shown in the Roman Catholic Church (37.25 per cent of the population).

The South Slavs with the Austrian imprint were markedly different from those who formerly had been Turkish raya, but they were also different from the Dinaric freedom fighters. These three elements were united in the Yugoslav state and made life in the first era a difficult problem after centuries of estrangement. Contrary to the hopes and desires of the founders and of the people themselves, the beginning of common life was very difficult. The divisive tendencies seemed to grow stronger than the unifying ones, and the regional peculiarities, developed under Eastern and Western influences, seemed to become even more extreme than before. The process of meeting, mixing, amalgamation, and "acculturation" was stormy to the point of explosion.

The unification operated in a certain sense like the contact of different cultures. In some regions, it affected the people as an invading foreign culture would have. The new state influenced their lives through military service, police force, taxation and courts, state monopolies and agrarian reform, relief funds for "passive areas" and political parties in a manner which was completely strange to many of them.

The specific qualities of the new state were derived from those of the various regions; these emerging qualities, in turn, influenced the historical regions in a reciprocal process. The result was more and different than the sum of regional qualities. Some qualities were nullified, others strengthened one another, while some qualities emerged as dominant in the whole compound, the Yugoslav state.

The first common quality which emerged was friction and disappointment with each other. In this atmosphere even the question of

<sup>2</sup> These and all other figures are from the 1931 Census, which served as a basis for my survey.

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nationality became a problem, although all South Slavs have one ethnic foundation and the language differences are smaller than differences between dialects of other peoples. A peculiar detail sharpened the contrasts, namely the lack of a traditional common name. The names of Serbs, Croats, etc., recalled proud memories; the name "Yugoslavs" or "Jugoslavs," however, is an artifact<sup>3</sup> meaning South Slavs, as "jug" means south.<sup>4</sup> For the sake of the new name no one wished to relegate his historical name to second place. The Italians, or the Germans, who had united into national states fifty years earlier, had not only regional names but also a common name from time immemorial, and therefore their common nationality was never questioned. Here, however, in fraternal struggles the first thought was that of parting.

The most important cause of discord and unhappiness was the weakness of the Yugoslav state administration, which was generally felt to be a failure. Although many of the leading statesmen had fought for unification and started to work with great enthusiasm, the sad truth became apparent very soon: The administration everywhere dropped to a level lower than it had been before the war. The different traditions did not blend, rather they made each other ineffective.

It seemed as if the merits of each former routine of administration were erased in the new state, and only their shortcomings remained. Little was left from the efficient Austrian administration, of the Serbian and Montenegrin democratic ways. The heroic tradition, especially, seemed unsuited to a new, bigger state, composed of different elements. In the central offices, nepotism and corruption developed, and people began to fear state offices and officers. Unscrupulous businessmen and corrupt bureaucrats divided funds and bribes, causing the standard of living to drop lower and lower. Ordinary citizens and honest administrators were impotent against the cliques of profiteers. Moreover, the fights among the cliques looked dangerously like fights among the Yugoslav peoples themselves.

Administrative practices had developed from old Serbian procedure. But in Serbia before the First World War weaknesses in organization were counterbalanced by patriarchal dignity and responsibility. The distances in the country were small; everything

<sup>3</sup> It is for purely political reasons that the Bulgars are not called Yugoslavs as they, too, are South Slavs.

<sup>4</sup> During her first years the new state was called SHS, state of Serbs, Croats (Hrvati), and Slovenes; it was not officially renamed Yugoslavia until 1929.



could be settled personally; paper work was unimportant. In the unified state, this way of familistic dealing had unfortunate results. For every application, for the smallest official decision, people had to travel to Belgrade, the capital, or else entrust the business to an "interventionist." Every movement seemed braked, to linger and loiter, to remain forever pending. The Serbian peasants, who were the bearers of the state idea and of the tradition of freedom, were unable to overcome these difficulties.

The money economy too developed under unfortunate conditions. Serbia as a state was built through revolutionary action; gradual evolution was virtually unknown. State institutions did not become more flexible in connection with a money economy as in other countries; when the world-wide depression hit, they were completely helpless.

Many measures seemed to be ill-fated, causing setbacks and unforeseen reactions, as for instance the policy of the state monopolies. The idea was that the state monopolies would cover a great part of the state expenses and that direct taxes could be held low. But this policy caused a further lowering of the standard of living, as nearly everything the peasants bought were items of state monopoly. Salt, tobacco, matches, and kerosene for lamps were monopoly articles; coffee and sugar also stood under monopoly tax. The price of sugar was the highest in Europe, four times as high as in England. Those peasants who produced tobacco were the sworn enemies of the monopoly administration because of the low prices they received for their products. They sold the larger part of their tobacco crop illegally, which resulted in endless fights with the armed police.

Agrarian reform was a similar case. The division of the great estates was intended to help the peasants with little or no land. But the reform did not bring much success—few were contented and many were embittered. The new owners were not able to use the land successfully as they lacked the capital to buy equipment and livestock. The land was often parceled out according to political judgments (and prejudices) to the disadvantage of the Moslem population. The impoverishment of Bosnia was caused partly by the peculiar way the agrarian reform was carried through.

Poverty in the countryside was the other main cause of unhappiness. At the time of this survey, the whole of life was overshadowed by the *kriza*, the depression. The economic world crisis hit Yugoslavia in 1931, before she had even reached her twelfth birthday, preventing any consolidation and economic growth. Agrarian prod-

ucts could not be sold, the peasants lost all credit. In many parts of the country, especially in the Karst areas, where only tobacco and wine were produced, starvation lasted for years. The peasants had no money at all; many could not even buy salt, but "salted" with ash. In every single region people were worse off than in "peace time," as the prewar period was nostalgically called.

This decline was, however, blamed not so much on the world-wide depression as on the administration and bureaucracy, for it was obvious that the administration was completely unable to parry the blows. In all regions, one could hear people sigh: "If only the administration were orderly, decent, speedy, as it was in peace time, it would not be so hard to bear poverty!"

This stormy period of twenty-two and a half years left its mark on the people, and the generation which grew up in the interwar period carries the visible stamp of the first Yugoslav era just as clearly as did the generation which had grown up in Austria or in the Ottoman Empire. The youth acquired the belief that dissatisfaction was the unchangeable fate of humans, and impotence toward a country's administration and economy was inborn in man.

The consequences of living in a common state were entirely unexpected; no one could have foreseen the difficulties which would arise. Nor could anyone have predicted that reactions in the various regions would become so different, and that the divisive forces in public life would become so strong. Least of all could anyone have known that qualities would develop below the surface which would come to the fore only later, under the pressure of an enemy occupation, and which would testify in favor of this much-blamed first Yugoslav era.

The German occupation and the fighting against it showed that a certain amount of fusion had taken place, although this did not become visible before the Second World War. It seems that in spite of everything the heroic component became dominant, as the resistance during the war showed.

A little scene which a foreign traveler experienced, on the very day when the period we are dealing with finished, is not untypical. The scene was described to me by the well-known Austrian poet and playwright Franz Theodor Csokor. Csokor was in Yugoslavia when the Germans invaded the country. Fleeing with many others toward the Adriatic coast, he entered an inn at the roadside to rest. There he noticed a young Yugoslav army officer sitting exhausted and desperate at a table and murmuring over and over again: "If we had

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only given supreme command to Miloš Obilić instead of to Vuk Branković, this could never have happened!" Csokor, who only understood a little of the language, was most curious to know whether the officer was talking about cabinet ministers and officers of the general staff or about Belgrade politicians, and asked him. It took Csokor a long time to understand that the officer was talking about the heroes of the Kosovo battle, who to him were not dead at all in that spring of 1941.

#### *Some Statistical Data*

About fourteen million people lived in this country of about the size of Great Britain; the great majority of them were peasants who lived in the villages where they had been born. The two million strong national minorities (mostly Albanians, Hungarians, and Germans) were also peasants, settled for generations. Yugoslavia had the highest percentage of agrarian population in Europe: According to Yugoslav statistics, based on occupational distribution, 76.5 per cent were peasants. According to League of Nations statistics, based on size of residence, 83 per cent lived in rural communities. For comparison, the number of peasants according to the latter definition were for Italy 44 per cent, Czechoslovakia 33 per cent, Switzerland 22 per cent, England 5 per cent.<sup>5</sup>

Production as well as export was that of a peasant country. The main products of the country were corn and wheat, flax, wine, plums, and tobacco. Exports were lumber, corn, plums, hemp, tobacco, pork, poultry, eggs, fish, leather (and copper). Forests were of great importance, as they covered nearly one-third of the land. Cattle breeding was equally important; there were nine million sheep, two million goats, four million cattle, three million swine, and one and a quarter million horses, practically all owned by peasants. Sheep and goats were concentrated in the mountain areas and provided the highlanders with food and clothing. Industry was insignificant.

There were 347 administrative districts plus 72 urban communities.

#### *Historical Regions within Yugoslavia*

The eight regions which were united in 1918 remained of paramount importance for moulding the life of the people through all the interwar period. Especially in the rural areas, the newly founded state of Yugoslavia often seemed less real than did the historical

<sup>5</sup> Dudley Kirk, *Europe's Population in the Interwar Years*, League of Nations, 1946.



The Austro-Hungarian  
frontiers - - - - -

The Yugoslav frontiers as  
drawn in 1918 ———

### The Balkans and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1914

regions with their traditional ways of life, standards, and relationships.

Of these regions, the following had formerly belonged to Austria:

*Slovenia*, an Alpine region, until the unification closely linked with the Austrian half of the Monarchy. It had a highly developed economy and school system, as the area had been removed from the fate and the fights of the Balkans. Slovenian is a South Slav language, long acknowledged, having a rich literature. Religion, Catholic.

*Voyvodina* in the Danube basin, belonging to the Hungarian half of the Monarchy. It possessed a fertile plain, Serbian Orthodox population, and large Hungarian and German minority groups.

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*Croatia and Slavonia*, partly fertile land with dense population, partly Dinaric Alps. Belonging to the Hungarian half of the Monarchy, they never lost their autonomy and independent political life. The Military March had, to a great part, a Serbian Orthodox population. Language, Serbo-Croatian. Religion, in the majority Catholic.

*Dalmatia*, at the Adriatic coast, pure rocky Karst. Peasants here were engaged in fishing and seafaring. The area had belonged for centuries to the Venetian Republic and had a progressive economy. It was also linked with the West through numerous emigrants overseas. Language, Serbo-Croatian. Religion, Catholic.

*Bosnia and Herzegovina*, combining Eastern and Western influences, belonged to Austria for forty years after the Turkish epoch. Its rich land was covered with forests. Influential were feudal traditions and strong Oriental ties. Language, Serbo-Croatian. Religion, Orthodox, Moslem, and Catholic.

Three regions that were united into Yugoslavia had never belonged to Austria. The first two were dominated by resistance fighting against the Turkish rule and had won their independence, the third was dominated by the Turks:

*Serbia*, a region of fertile, rolling hills, an immigration area for the past two centuries. At the time of unification, it was a kingdom under the rule of the Karageorgevich dynasty. The Serbian king became king of Yugoslavia, Belgrade its capital. Language, Serbo-Croatian. Religion, Eastern Orthodox.

*Montenegro*, the "Black Mountains," a region of bare Karst rocks and high mountains. It was a kingdom under the dynasty of Petrovich-Nyegosh. The Montenegrins were the core of resistance fighting of the Serbs against the Turks. Language, Serbo-Croatian. Religion, Eastern Orthodox.

*Macedonia*, a land of an old sedentary population, vestiges of Byzantine culture and long-lasting Turkish rule. A strong Moslem minority, mostly Albanians, dominated. Language of the majority, Macedonian—at time of the survey considered a Serbo-Croatian dialect, today acknowledged as separate language. Religion of the majority, Eastern Orthodox.

Together with Macedonia the areas Sanjak, Metohia, and Kosovo, between Serbia and Montenegro, had been freed from Turkey 1912-1913.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> For reviewing the historical background of the various regions see chapter "The Yugoslav Regions," where it is presented in detail.



The historical regions of Yugoslavia

The historical regions within Yugoslavia remained decisive for every aspect of life, despite the fact that officially they were non-existent. They were merely historical relics, having ceased to be administrative units. In 1929 the government had divided the country into nine areas, called *banovinas*, different from the traditional regions. This was done in order to weaken separatist tendencies and to promote unification. This goal, however, was never reached. Regional characteristics could not be eliminated, and the inner cohesion of each region became even stronger. After the Second World War, the historical regions became the federal republics of postwar Yugoslavia. The regional divisions I have employed here are very similar to today's official ones. The fact that people lived primarily in regional traditions compelled me to do my research work along

these lines, and to look for a method of presenting material which would take this reality into account.

*Research Method Based on History*

The key for studying norms and changes in the South Slav family was a comparison between villages. I had chosen villages as smallest unit, and not families or individuals, mainly because it was impossible to find large numbers of investigators to whom the peasants would reliably confide their intimate problems. To get information about villages as a whole, however, was quite possible. The opportunity of examining hundreds of villages in all parts of the country with the help of people born in them or living in them for many years was a unique piece of good fortune.

While there was not much difficulty in collecting abundant material, the problem of how to deal with it was not so easily solved. A statistical method had to be found, as it was hardly possible to examine, interpret and present 305 sets of answers without statistical treatment. An additional reason for using statistics was the emotional nature of the replies. There was the danger of getting lost in touching details, and of becoming influenced by the attitude of the investigators, which was often far from objective.

The first question was how to group the villages for comparison. I tried several principles for grouping them; for instance, according to their economy or their distance from traffic or city centers. Yet all results were unrevealing, unsatisfactory, or even apparently false. It turned out that the historical-political moment or the regional style was so decisive for every aspect of life that it could not be ignored. I had to give up—at least for the moment—my attempts to find an alternative to the regional principle for the statistical treatment.

This was necessary although I ran into a troublesome technical obstacle as at the time of the survey the administrative units were banovinas: Over-all figures for the historical regions did not exist. If I needed some demographic data, from Bosnia for instance, I had to apply to three different statistical offices in three different towns, to collect the data for my villages, as this region was split between three banovinas. Although I could never entirely overcome this technical obstacle, there was no other way. Not taking into account the regional division meant a failure in bringing about anything of research value.

The behavior of people was conditioned to a high degree by the particular quality of life in any separate region of Yugoslavia, and this regional coloring was apparent in every single questionnaire. The regional style was so powerful in the villages that it even colored the manner of the expression of the reporter, so that merely from these shades of style one could guess the origin of any set of answers. (I frequently extracted answers the content of which contained no specific regional details and translated them for my Viennese statistical collaborator who did not understand Serbo-Croatian. In most cases he was able to recognize the origin of the reports merely from the style in which they were written, a further evidence for the decisive significance of the regional factor.)

When it was decided to group the villages according to historical regions, a second question arose: In what sequence were the regions to be listed so they would most faithfully represent reality, and thus avoid statistical tables presenting data without inner link and meaning. I found that here again I had to apply the historical principle, and I established a hypothesis about the historical sequence of the regions.

The fact that the historical or time element stood out clearly in every questionnaire and in every set of answers helped me to find this hypothesis. Each set came either from an old-world or a modern setting. Place of origin and stage of development were immediately apparent. For instance, a study of the replies left one with the inescapable impression that in Macedonian family life one was in a sense witnessing the past of family life in other regions. Bosnia seemed rather more recent, Serbia and Croatia more recent still. Each region set off the past of the other. In many districts millennial customs and standards seemed to have remained unchanged, whereas in others they had come to resemble those of the West European environment. The old Slav customs and standards of relationships were also apparently transformed to varying degrees in the various regions. The temporal succession was, as it were, shown on a background screen of spatial distribution. It was not far from this realization to the idea of making the various regions symbols of periods of time, and to compare regions in order to compare historical phases. Therefore, in order to obtain a scale I endeavored to classify my regions according to their degrees of development.

To achieve this arrangement it was, of course, necessary to specify the degree of "seniority of development." The seniority of any village was, however, easily recognizable to anyone reading the replies



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to the questionnaire. Nevertheless, to arrange the regions in a definite order, it was essential to have a definition and some system of marking off one from another. One had to decide exactly what one meant by "old-style" or "old." Was it ancient culture, economic backwardness, or a conservative attitude? Was "up-to-date" or "modern" identical with economically progressive, or with chaotic conditions, or with the great changes that had occurred in recent years?

As "old-style," I decided to mark those regions in which family relationships were consolidated on a traditional basis, where men's attitudes in various situations of daily life were clearly defined, and where people accepted such rules as eternal laws. Despite variations, many features were common in the patriarchal regions. I therefore treated the patriarchal setting as being a unitary stage of development, to be contrasted with various stages of change. These were the regions which I have marked as "old-style" or "patriarchal," using these adjectives as synonymous.

"Old-style" means backward in a very specific and restricted sense, and has no derogatory meaning, for the patriarchal regions are mostly regions of earlier high culture. For a long time they had been in the economic, technical, and artistic forefront, and only later was their manner of living petrified under the conservative influence of the decay of the Ottoman Empire. They may be compared to two regions, in one of which we have technical leadership, in the other a technical lag. An example would be Paris, which, with its first electric subways, was for a time the most advanced city in the field of transport. When, however, other cities constructed subways (partly modeled after the one in Paris), each successive system was better and more "up-to-date." The old "Metro," with its bad ventilation, seems old-fashioned today, and the city of Paris is now backward in the field of transport. However, Paris is quite capable of once again assuming first place. Indeed its earlier technical success in more than one sense gives it an advantage. Likewise with the "old-style" regions in Yugoslavia: Once progressive, they still have their potential, and are not behind the others in any disparaging sense.

As "up-to-date" or "modern," I classified regions in which patriarchal modes of life were destroyed under the influence of economic and political changes. In many districts, this took place at great speed, and family life was reduced to an anarchic state. Here men were guided much more strongly by their individual leanings and aims than in the patriarchal regions, and friction with other mem-

bers of the family became much more frequent. For this reason, all replies from such villages bear the mark of an atmosphere of conflict. These regions were therefore marked as in a state of "abrupt transformation," or as "modern."

There are, however, regions in which economic changes took place gradually, in the course of several generations. These are the districts through which pass great lines of communications, particularly those along the Adriatic coast, which at an early stage came under the influence of more progressive, Western economic life and administration. Here people adjusted to new conditions without losing their balance, and conflict played a lesser part. Family life is almost as stable as in the patriarchal world. These regions adopted new relationships at a relatively early date and, in a sense, have been modern for a long time. The social climate is both old-style and modern. They are regions with continuous development, a new equilibrium, and, despite the conservative element in them, are classified as the "most modern." The coast region here occupies the most advanced position.

To obtain a more reliable definition of the priority of the various regions, I endeavored to find objective indices. One proved to be the emancipation from Turkish rule, which occurred at varying times in the various regions. Since the conditions of life in the Ottoman Empire clearly had a conservative effect on all relationships, including those within the family, the regions which were longer under Turkish domination retained more indices of conservatism than those liberated earlier. The regions which were not liberated till 1912 were more old-style than those which broke away as early as the seventeenth century. Arranged according to this criterion, I established the following sequence of regions:

1. *Macedonian Albanian villages.* That is of the Albanian minority villages in Macedonia. A few villages in neighboring regions (such as in the Sanjak, Metohia, and Kosovo) are counted in with the Macedonian. The majority are Moslem. This region remained under Ottoman rule till 1912.

2. *Macedonian Christian villages.* The corresponding Christian villages of Macedonia. They are exclusively Orthodox.

3. *Bosnian Moslem villages.* Villages of Moslem faith in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to which are added those with mixed Moslem Christian population. This region was Turkish till 1878 and 1908, respectively.

4. *Bosnian Christian villages.* Orthodox and Catholic villages in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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5. *Serbian villages.* Those of the Serbia prior to the Balkan wars (pre-1912). Here emancipation began in 1806 and was completed in 1867.

6. *Croatian villages.* Those in Croatia, including Slavonia and Dalmatia, within the pre-1918 boundaries, with the exception of the coastal villages. The larger part of this area was never under Turkish rule, the remainder was freed from Turkish rule at the end of the seventeenth century.

7. *The Littoral or Coast Region.* Villages of the Adriatic coast within three miles (five kilometers) of the sea. This region includes the northern coast, formerly a district under Croatian rule, and the southern, or Dalmatian, coast. In this narrow zone, only the villages (but not the cities) belonged to the Ottoman Empire.

The inquiry was confined to regions in which Serbo-Croatian was at the time the official language, and Slovenia was not included. Montenegro and the Voivodina were only partially included in my statistics because I had not enough replies to the questionnaire from these regions.

The classification of the regions according to their liberation date from the Turkish rule coincides with the general impression of the prevalence of old style or new elements given by the reports, and with my direct observations. The regions, listed according to their seniority, follow this scale:

Littoral  
Croatia  
Serbia  
Bosnia Ch.  
Bosnia Mo.  
Macedonia Ch.  
Macedonia Al.

The sequence of regions for the statistical tables established according to the principle of seniority proved most helpful in further research. Many conclusions of this study became possible only with the help of the hypothesis about the time element in the regions, or the historical meaning, or regional characteristics.

At the end of the study, under the heading "The Methods Applied," a detailed discussion is given about my experience with the statistical method and techniques. Discussed there are matters such as the collection of data, the decision to take the village as a unit, the reliability of the reporters, and the statistical procedure adopted.