

BOOK REVIEWS

Sabrina P. Ramet. *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1962-1991*.
Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1992. Pp. xviii, 346.

Rarely do English language books on Yugoslavia contain much information about Slovenia. Partly, there is the language barrier; partly, there is the assumption that important things do not happen in small places. Mostly, it is because Yugoslavia experts, like most diplomats assigned to that country's capital, have been Belgrade-focussed. Ramet's book, a second edition (first published in 1984), which is available in paperback, is an exception and well-worth reading, not only for its treatment of "the Slovenian Syndrome," but for its clear and concise presentation of the recent history of Yugoslavia.

Politically, for Ramet, Slovenes in the second Yugoslavia are classified as "liberals." Since the 1960s they generally supported administrative decentralization, more federalism, application of profitability criteria where state investments were concerned, a more open society, pluralism within the party, and they emphasized the Republic over the Federation. Before the Eighties, however, Slovene assertiveness was pale compared with that of the Croats, who maintained their traditional noisy adversarial relationship to both Belgrades (capitals of Serbia and Yugoslavia). For the period before the 80s, Ramet discusses the "incipient frondescence of separatism," which Stane Kavčič's government of 1970-71 represented, although it was greatly overshadowed by developments in Croatia at the time. Also noted is Slovenia's input into the ongoing debates surrounding the fund to aid underdeveloped republics (and Kosovo), established in 1965; the issue is especially noteworthy, since in early 1990 Slovenia was first to cut off its contributions to those coffers. Croatia stopped payment about one-half year later. (The two northern republics had supplied the fund with 45% of its money). Ramet also discusses how Slovenia pursued her own economic self-interests: promoting the building of a railroad to Koper, constructing roads that suited Slovenia's rather than Yugoslavia's highway infrastructure, and engaging in a cooperative project with Austria to construct a tunnel through the Karavanken mountains, — to mention only some of the more important developments. By the late 80s Slovenia's self-interest, even before the final demise of the old regime, involved forging ahead with capitalistic reforms. Yugoslavia's first private factory opened near Maribor in spring 1986, and in 1988 a stock exchange was established in Slovenia's capital, Ljubljana.

Ramet believes that it was to be expected that each republic pursue its own interests, given that administrative reforms in the late Sixties empowered the six republics (soon also the two autonomous provinces) with legislative power on the federal level. Thereafter movement toward confederation and sovereignty for the republics was inevitable, an assertion made already in Ramet's 1984 edition. Toward this end, in the Eighties, the Slovenes replaced the Croats as Belgrade's chief adversaries. "The Slovenian

Syndrome," really a Ljubljana syndrome, had many components, including fringe social movements (gays, ecologists, etc.) and the appearance of various radical media voices (*Mladina*, *Radio Student*, and *Nova revija*). The "syndrome" expanded its scope as Slovenes were politicized in spring 1988, when rumors about Yugoslav Army plans to deal with radicalism in Slovenia led to arrests, a trial, and imprisonment for the four accused. Critically, a wound was inflicted on Slovene self-awareness when Serbo-Croatian was decreed the official language of the military court and used in the 1988 trial. Ramet, quoting Miko Tripalo, a Croatian activist of 1970-71, maintains that "nationalism of all sorts is one of the negative reactions to unitarism. Its essence is *étatisme*, but at the level of the republic." That assertion is perhaps Ramet's central theme. By 1988 the engine of republican *étatisme* had definitely been fueled in Slovenia. To put it simply, the trial had made Slovenes into revolutionaries.

The confrontation between Slovenia and Serbia was definitely on. Slovenes challenged Serbia on the issue of human rights for Albanians in Kosovo. They responded to a Serbian economic boycott with one of their own in late 1989. Slovene Communists then broke with the Yugoslav League of Communists (January 1990), walking out of a plenary session in Belgrade, precipitating the LCY's ignominious collapse only weeks later. Multi-party elections in April 1990 which saw the establishment of a non-Communist, coalition (DEMOS) government, and the December 1990 plebiscite, authorizing a declaration of Slovenia's independence, were crowning touches to the Slovene response to Great Serbist centralist, unitarism. Slovenia's declaration of independence in June 1991 brought war with the Yugoslav army, but Ramet's book which ends its account in October 1991, discusses war time developments only briefly.

This book whose purpose is to test a social science model, concludes with a quantitative analysis of data. In both editions (1984 & 1992) Ramet's assumption has been that Yugoslavia functioned like a 19th century European state system, an international model based on the idea of balance-of-power. The six republics and two autonomous regions of that state were therefore constantly busy negotiating alliances and coalitions to make the federative state work. When Ramet matches his hypotheses with the crises affecting Yugoslavia, his conclusions are very instructive. They help to explain the nature of past clashes among that state's former political units, but they also suggest future areas of conflict. One example Ramet cites has to do with Slovene-Croat relations. Whereas Slovenes and Croats tended to agree overwhelmingly on political matters (17-6), they were in conflict almost as often as in agreement on economic issues (8-5). For those who have been scratching their heads about the Slovene-Croat dispute over fishing rights in the Adriatic, this is the book for you. The dispute's history goes back at least twenty years.

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