Was Tito the Last Habsburg? Reflections on Tito's Role in the History of the Balkans

Introduction

It is now more than ten years since the collapse of socialism in Yugoslavia, and with it, the end of Tito’s rule. During this time, both the era and the man have been examined by historians and others seeking to write — or to rewrite — the past. However, the critical processing of Yugoslav socialism remains somewhat confused, lacking the theoretical and methodological underpinnings which could enable a sober re-evaluation of the past. Nor is the confusion conducive to a productive dialogue, stemming as it does from a multiplicity of conflicting socialist criticisms. The new national narratives born in the 1990s have an unusual ability to organize remembrance and to make the past sensible. Revised histories in the new Balkan states have created a similarly narrative continuity and provided a set of memories as proof of coherent ethnic histories and an absence of any common past.

In the vacuum of memory, which was created by the collapse of the communist party in 1990, the new ethnic personal and collective memory formed a new identity, a new continuity and a new set of values. After the collapse of Yugoslavia and communism, the suppressed banned memory formed a new extremely homogeneous memory system no more usable for the brotherhood than for war and separatism. Both memory systems — communist and post-communist — were extreme and constructed with opposite functions: unity-separatism, national peace-war, federal-national statehood and socialism-capitalism. Despite this contrast, there existed in both memory systems a highly moralized struggle, a central connection in the narration about the past: a stand for class and national liberation over all other values.

Clearly, this makes a rational and fruitful debate on Tito’s Yugoslavia difficult, if not impossible. This article enters the debate to take a fresh look at the situation. It does not draw on the images of a primordial “golden age” common to the rhetoric of national mobilization; rather, it examines Taylor’s (1990) evaluation of Tito as the last Habsburg in the context of a stable age for the multiethnic West Balkans.

What is Tito's place in the history of the Balkans? The answer depends on the observer. It goes without saying that past experiences are always interpreted in the context of present
experiences and motivations. Tito conventionally has been viewed as belonging to one of two dichotomous camps — either friend or enemy. In the eyes of a conservative observer, he was a radical and godless tyrant who broke with tradition; to a nationalist, Tito was the enemy of the nation state and the nation-state’s sentiments. Liberals simply saw him as a totalitarian ruler; to a communist, however, he was a fighter for class justice, self-management democracy and proletarian internationalism.

Moreover, over time, Tito’s image has changed in Serbia and Croatia. Serbian nationalists now argue that Tito was an enemy of Serbia. They accuse him of dividing up the Serbs and scattering the Serbian nation, so that Serbs live not only in Serbia, but also in Bosnia and Croatia. Serbian nationalism has therefore demonized and blamed Tito, ignoring the fact that in Tito’s Yugoslavia, the Serbs could live in a common state, albeit distributed throughout different republics. In Croatia, another version of blame is evident, a type of “double-memory” politics. Here, Tito is rejected as a Yugoslav. As Tudjman says, while Tito, who was born in Croatia to a Croatian-Slovenian family, was a prestigious, world-renowned statesman, his background could not be completely rejected. In fact, in Kumrovač, Tito’s birthplace, there is to this day an annual commemoration ceremony. Even so, in December 2004, Tito's monument, also located in Kumrovač, was destroyed by Croat nationalists. In short, in Serbia, Tito is viewed with hostility, while in Croatia, no one wants anything more to do with his Yugoslavia.

The best way to define Tito's rule is as a complex dialectical representation of modernized authoritarianism. It is at the farthest possible extreme from the simple totalitarianism-democracy categories that blur so many contemporary analyses, which are in turn swayed by nationalist conservative thinking. Tito's Yugoslavia, like the Austrian Habsburg monarchy, retained relatively decentralized states that delegated considerable authority to local elites, which either encouraged or tolerated the survival of ethnic and linguistic diversity. Tito’s was an ethnically mixed Balkan state, as were the Ottoman and Habsburg empires. Indeed, although both empires were instrumental in promoting the ethnically mixed societies of the present day, the Habsburgs' belated application of western strategies of state-building placed a premium on honest, efficient and professionally dedicated administrators, as well as the creation of a statewide infrastructure for education and commerce. By contrast, the Turks abided by a less sophisticated model of government more commonly found in other Asiatic empires (Ingrao 1996). In a final analysis, then, Tito’s multiethnic state was closer to the Habsburg model.

Multi-ethnicity in the Balkans has always been both the solution and the problem. Indeed, while ethnic coexistence in general was undermined by the nation-state model that emerged from the French Revolution (Ingrao 1996), in Yugoslavia, Tito solved the problem of mutual acceptance and toleration and created a balance between ethnic groups living in the West Balkans. His was not a simple authoritarian paternalism typical of traditional Balkan society.
Rather, it was a more complex rule containing within it radical and conservative, democratic and authoritarian, centralistic and self-management elements.

Although Josip Broz Tito (1892-1980) never hid his ethnic origins, he always presented himself as a Yugoslav. Moreover, his Yugoslavism was not merely declarative or pragmatic. His supra-ethnic self-awareness originated from Marxism, wherein the working class, not the nation, is the subject of history, but it was also dictated by his ideologically neutral, organizational desire to integrate a multinational state. The idea of Yugoslavism was that Slovenes, Croats, Serbs and Moslems were kindred peoples, that they would do well to live in a common state and that if they did not already have a common historical narrative, they could develop one, which is to say, a narrative in which some common aspirations could be identified. Tito's main Yugoslav narrative included anti-fascism, anti-Stalinism and self-management. In his narrative, traitors and collaborators were stigmatized and their identity and deeds widely published. What was most important in Tito’s era, though, was that there was no ethnic differentiation of the enemies — they were all collaborators, all committing atrocities, and no one was guiltier than anyone else. A federal state needs a balanced memory, in this case, the symmetry of national atrocities.

The chiliastic slogan “Brotherhood and Unity” (a new version of the slogan from the French Revolution) claimed that communism had solved Yugoslavia’s national problems. It was a slogan denoting heroic postwar centralization and unification. In general, all state-directed unifications of regions and ethnic groups demand a strong integrative institution (church, army, party) and a prominent personal symbol whose charisma can overcome all localisms. The more markedly that statehood and government are reduced to a personal element, the easier it becomes to control state institutions. In theory, in Yugoslavian socialism, the role of a chief-of-state was clearly defined in the Yugoslavian Constitution. In reality, however, it was never quite clear enough (i.e., with respect to the undefined relations between monopoly party and state). Any deliberate efforts to achieve power and/or to make changes were only effective to the extent they were in tune with popular resonance. In this area, the genius of Tito as head-of-state was highly praised, at least while he was in power.

**Authoritarian Modernization: Historical Examples**

History abounds with examples of how authoritarian regimes, through the singular will of a ruler, and/or his cult, have integrated wide regions, equalized a motley collection of religions and customs and turned ephemeral regional communities into parts of a strong state (Kuljić 1994).

In ancient times, the cult of a living ruler, best officer or warlord (e.g., Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar) was a strong catalyst for the creation of huge continental empires, whereas the republican polis, with a limited chief authority in countries such as Greece and Rome, was not
able to integrate wider regions. It was difficult to regulate the authority of a warlord/liberator, especially when he was intentionally deified to enhance his ruling authority. Thus, ancient republics, such as Rome, became monarchies, supporting the new concept of a ruler with unlimited powers and the authority of a god, who, because of these powers, was able to integrate diverse conquered ethnic territories.

Throughout history the state-integrating role of a ruler's cult has always been important, but the organizational means of integration and ideological content of the cult have depended on the society’s degree of development. In ancient times, the army and the divine warlord were the agents of expansion and integration. During most of the Middle Ages and at the beginning of modern times, it was the Christian Church, while in the more modern age this role has been taken over by various forms of secular ideologies. In a state with divided ideologies it has not been uncommon for the ruler to strengthen state unity by means of a supra-confessional policy (Henry IV of France, Frederick the Great of Prussia). In backward communities, the cosmopolitism of territories and centralization of the leader's authority have been uncommonly brutal. Russian rulers such as Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great are good examples of this, but Henry IV and Frederick the Great could also be included in the list. These rulers were neither reactionary nor conservative, although they did favor the retention of feudal relations. Ironically, the result of their activities was exactly the opposite: the overcoming of anarchic feudal localisms, cosmopolitism of the state and centralization of the authority of the chief of state.

The importance of Ivan the Terrible during the second half of the 16th century lies in the fact that he overruled the motley set of common laws of the various Russian dukedoms and that using the theocratic teaching of the infallibility of a ruler who followed God's will, he made way for the ascendance of laws that were later more solidly enacted by Peter the Great. By the end of the 16th century, the restitution of the post-Byzantine ideal of an absolute Orthodox empire in Russia was a progressive move. The centralization prepared the bureaucratization of absolutism that came later, followed in turn by industrialization and the breakthrough of secular education in an enlightened absolutism. Without Peter the Great — and his precursor, Ivan the Terrible — Russia might well have remained in a state of chaotic disunity, and these historical processes would have been postponed, perhaps even prevented. But the Russian ruler is not unique in history. In a similar manner, at the crossroads of the 16th and 17th centuries, Henry IV strengthened France with a supra-confessional policy and prepared it for the reign of Louis XIV, who stabilized and modernized the country, ideologically and organizationally, using his authority as Sun King. So, too, in 18th-century Prussia, did Frederick the Great, drawing upon his own cult and with the assistance of militarization, create the basis of the future German state, thereby accelerating the end of feudalism in Central Europe (Kuljić 1994, 259-266).
The Historical Context of Tito’s Ruling

This brief historical digression serves to show that the comparison of Yugoslavia and Tito's cult with the overall European historical experience is not without basis. The Balkans, albeit belatedly, faced similar civilization and development problems, which, as in Central Europe, were solved by centralization.

In addition to the ideological determinant of Tito's activities, one should not forget the chaotic geopolitical tradition of the mixed multiethnic surroundings. The multiethnic Yugoslavian territory had a long tradition of wars, religious fighting and ethnic cleansing, and could not be divided into ethnically pure regions without further violent conflicts. By the early 1920s after the fall of the Ottoman and the Austrian Empires, the political choice for Yugoslavia was reduced to two alternatives.

The first option was more or less authoritarian monarchic or republican centralization, the equalizing of heritage by means of strict state measures, the strengthening of integration by means of a powerful leader cult and the gradual creation of a strong Balkan state that could stabilize the region and protect its peoples from the major powers. The second was the creation of a decentralized political system without a unique ideological integrative component (i.e., religious or secular ideology), which, arguably, would result in irrational conflicts between ethnic parties, exhausting genocidal wars and the establishment of a number of small states condemned to weak international political power.

Of course, it would be overstating the matter to claim that the state organization of Yugoslav territories can be reduced to the two mentioned alternatives. It would be equally wrong to argue that a multiparty parliamentary democracy in the Balkans is possible only in pure ethnic states, since during the 70-year period of Yugoslavia's existence (1918-1941 and 1945-1992), a multiparty regime functioned for about twenty of those years (1918-1929, 1931-1941 and 1990-1992). However, the regimes were highly unproductive and handicapped by paralyzing conflicts between ethnic political parties. Conflicts between the major world powers only intensified internal conflicts in the Balkans.

Tito's response was not simple proletarian internationalism but a broader attempt to unite the explosive Balkan territories on the basis of their being part of a unique Yugoslav nation. To this end, he furnished a clear historical narrative, creating a certain amount of consensus about the past and its meaning (which could be summarized as “1066 and all that” for the English, “1776 and all that” for the Americans, and heroic 1945 and all that for Tito's Yugoslavia). The partisan war justified the construction of the new federal state and supplied heroic liberation: it was not the National but the People's (Volks) Liberation Fight.
The dominant historical narrative — the liberation from fascism and stalinism — was maintained not only via schools and cultural artifacts, but also by force. This is, of course, easier in a one-party regime, but certain important international circumstances favored the strengthening of Tito's rule: the stable distribution of spheres of interest, European security and a strong Soviet Union (as an ideological support) were foreign-policy props to Tito's regime. Apart from this, the relatively high respectability of the world Left, as well as the separation of Yugoslavia from the Soviet bloc, neutralized the demonizing of self-managing socialism as totalitarianism within a large part of the world's non-Left public opinion. By skillfully manipulating these favorable circumstances, Tito suppressed disintegrative party and state tendencies and stayed in power for thirty-five years. The length of his rule alone indicates that Tito's role should not be considered ephemeral, but rather, that he created a regime which although failing in the end, chalked up a number of important achievements. Arguably, a longer period of ruling is a more reliable basis for the judgment of historical accomplishment than a shorter one (Ivan the Terrible spent 31 years on the throne, Louis XIV ruled for 55 years, Frederick the Great for 46, emperor of Austria Francis Joseph for 68, and Stalin for 25 years).

**Tito's Multifunctional Charisma**

Institutionally, Tito was a unifying link among the state, the party and the army. He was represented as the liberator who united all Yugoslav nations that were divided in previous wars. The Yugoslav People's Army — and not the communist party — was the major source of his institutional power. Tito was the war-time military leader in the struggle against the fascists and the supreme army commander after the war. The communist partisans’ “People's Liberation Fight” against the Axis invaders and the Yugoslav quislings during World War II was the founding myth of socialist Yugoslavia (Höpken 1999, 105). The successful resistance to fascism and Stalinism brought international sympathies to Tito's regime.

Tito's domestic authority, however, was based on the charisma of a victorious military leader and the major successes of his modernization program. The struggle for freedom from foreign occupation was always played up by the communists in their own attempt to strike a chord with the masses. He was represented as the liberator from Hitler in 1945 and from Stalin in 1948, but above all he was represented as the liberator of the working class from capitalist exploitation. The justification for his unlimited power was secular and did not rely on theological, dynastic or racial premises.

Every communist leader is primarily a party leader. The leadership over the communist party is a primary source of his claim to legitimacy. A communist leader is not only a symbol of state unity, but also of the ideology of a class, historically viewed as progressive. Because of this
special class mission, a party leader as the hard cadre is exposed to no bureaucratic competition or any other form of distribution of power. While Tito used his bureaucratic control over key institutions (the army, state, party), he nevertheless claimed the aura of a charismatic leader, entitled to arbitrates among the national party factions. As an arbiter he was pragmatic: before the (bloodless) purges he carefully laid the groundwork for them and ensured majority support in the key party bodies. He issued patriotic proclamations to gain the support of the masses only in the moments when the state was in danger of Soviet invasion — from 1949 to 1953 and in 1968.

In socialism the power of the supreme leader stops with his death or his overthrow. There is neither a regular procedure for his replacement after the end of the term in office nor any instances of voluntary abdications. The lack of regular procedure for the replacement of the ultimate leader is a consequence of the priority of the party interests over state interests and of insufficiently defined authority of the leading cadre. Consequently, the change of a supreme leader often triggers factional struggles in the party elite.

During the 1980s, the approach to the history of interethnic violence was to change substantially, especially in Serbia. The new post-Titoist myth of hidden history was an important generator of renewed interethnic struggles, which exploded in the 1991-1995 wars. While the history of wartime massacres was not kept secret in socialism, the authorities allowed only certain interpretations of these events (Sindbaek 2000). The great number of publications in the 1990s about Serbs and Croats as victims of Tito's regime normalized nationalism and contributed to new interethnic tensions. The politics of memory and forgetting after 1945 and in the 1990s were polar opposites. While the Titoist myth was a legitimation of the socialistic, federal Yugoslavia, the anti-Titoistic myth normalized anti-Yugoslavism. Both myths supported the “liberatory” political culture of the Balkans.

**Tito between Modernization and Conservatism**

Tito’s one-party personal rule promoted authoritarian multi-nationalism, partial modernization and secularization. The cult of personality, developed on a non-ethnic basis, was not perceived by the masses as the rule of a Croatian representative, but as rule by a Yugoslav. Tito's personality was the organizational backbone of the link between the state, the party and the army. His cult served as an unusually active means of ideological integration.

The positive contributions of Tito's multinational policy would have been more lasting if the alternatives to the irrational cult of the leader and to the monopoly of the communist party had been developed on time. Perhaps a more flexible policy (a weaker party monopoly) would have filled up the explosive vacuum of disintegration created after the disappearance of the communist alliance of Yugoslavia with Tito's charisma.
All uncritical praise of the infallible leader testifies to the manipulative character of social integration. The creation of a cult of personality is a special form of an alienated perception of politics. Still, the question is whether Tito's cult was the goal of his regime or the means to establish a modern multinational society based on social justice? Even authoritarian integration can have progressive goals. Tito's cult did contribute to forty-five years of inter-ethic peace in the Balkans (Kuljić 1998, 369-370). While authoritarian, the ethnic communist politics balanced the war guilt of different nations. In the multi-party system after 1990, the balancing of the national guilt was impossible.¹ Thus, by the end of the decade the Serbian focus on their own national victimization was countered by a Croatian one. Furthermore, the presence of genocide memories in the public debate led to the escalation of fear and anger. These emotions in turn contributed to the brutal character of the military confrontations. Was Tito's authoritarianism an unavoidable cost of forty-five years of previously unthinkable Balkan peace?

British historian Allan Taylor calls Tito “the last Habsburg” because he ruled the country with eight major ethnic groups, gave them “cultural autonomy” and restrained their secessionist antagonisms. Unlike Yugoslavia between the two World Wars, Tito's state did not have a dominant ethnic group and it was governed by a multiethnic (communist) elite. Taylor adds that the Czechoslovakian and Yugoslav idea, portrayed as an expression of the “natural” aspirations of the masses, were in fact a new version of the “Austrian idea” — a means of keeping different ethnic groups together (Taylor 1990, 324.). Judging by its complex ethnic structure, Yugoslavia was undoubtedly very similar to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but the integrative ideas (Marxism and Catholicism) were essentially different. The first signs of ethnic conflict surfaced in the revolutions of 1848, in Tito's Yugoslavia in 1971. Nationalism destroyed both supranational states. In spite of considerable social, economic and ideological differences, we can see certain similarities of the techniques of integration and the development of the ruler's cult in these two multiethnic states.

Right up until its dissolution in 1918, the Habsburg Empire had Czechs, Italians, Hungarians, Croats, Poles and Jews among its most important civilian and military leaders. Similarly, Tito's state counted Serbs, Croats, Slovenes and Moslems, but also Albanians and Hungarians among its population. The Yugoslav Marxist designed his balanced multiethnic concept under the influence of Austro-Marxism and Russian Bolshevism. To curb the dangerous nationalism of the most numerous ethnic group, two autonomous regions were introduced into Serbia (Kosovo and Vojvodina). However, the communist policy underestimated the disruptive potential of the recognition of new nations (Bosnian Muslims and the Macedonians) and the elevation of ethnic minorities (Albanians) to the status of “nationalities.” As far as the regulation of relations between ethnic groups is concerned, the new situation between the ethnic groups that

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Balkanistica 20 (2007)
arose by recognizing the new nationalities was most probably a result of the priority of foreign nonalignment over more or less improvised domestic policy.

Compared to the inter-war Yugoslavism of King Alexander Karadjordjević I, the regime of Josip Broz Tito rested not only on a new ideological basis, but also on a different polarization of ethnic forces. The Yugoslav monarchy recognized only three main ethnic groups, and King Alexander tried to curb Croatian secessionism with a Serbian-Slovenian alliance. The socialist Yugoslavia was composed of six republics and two provinces. In spite of a one-party regime, there was room for more complex political combinations, but also for greater chaos after the disappearance of the charismatic leader and the disintegration of the communist party.

Tito prevented further liberalization of the regime in order to maintain state unity, the monopolistic position of his party and his personal rule. Moreover, even during the period of the most vehement anti-Stalinism, Tito always depended on the support of the Soviet Union. Complete distancing from the Soviet Union was not only ideologically almost impossible, but also not opportune for geostrategic positioning. By playing the role of “Marxist dissidents,” Tito's regime could gain concessions from both the East and the West and thus exploit the superpower competition to its own advantage. Tito’s foreign policy was built on the principle of equal distance between the West and the East and was a rare example of the successful escape from the usual subordination of small countries to the interests of major powers.

In its own epoch, Tito's personal ruling was not as conspicuous as it would be today. Not only Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Zhivkov, Ceauşescu and Husak, but also Franco, Salazar and the indisputable De Gaulle were Tito's authoritarian contemporaries. From a broader perspective, it was even relatively mild, compared to the broad spectrum of non-European, non-socialist authoritarian regimes. During these times, the expansion of American imperialism neutralized comments about the totalitarian nature of socialism, especially with regard to Tito's regime, which defended a policy of peaceful coexistence. Unlike many other communist countries, Yugoslavia had allowed its citizens to travel abroad since the beginning of 1960s. To wit, about 700,000 Yugoslav workers were employed in Western Europe in the 1970s.

There was, however, also a conservative side of Tito's cult, especially in the forced adoration of his role in social science and in the creation of an authoritarian political culture with the leader as a superman. That conservative side was felt by the intellectuals and political dissidents, but not by the working class and the peasants. The imbalance between domestic conservatism and open foreign politics was most pronounced during the last period of Tito's life. An excessive international prestige enabled the aging leader to dismiss the criticism of his personal power and to have a free hand in domestic policy.
The Dual Character of Tito’s Regime

A historical assessment of Tito's role requires an almost dialectical understanding of the tension between its progressive and conservative tendencies. Future research may appreciate Tito's charisma as a means of integrating a complex multiethnic state rather than as an expression of his pursuit of power. At the same time, it cannot be denied that the growing charisma encouraged his immoderate political ambitions. While highly objectionable, his personal glorification and the instrumental use of the ruler's cult are historically more ephemeral in comparison to the role of the charisma in multiethnic cooperation, state centralization and rapid modernization. The multiethnic ideology of Yugoslavism and the cult of supra-ethnic class leader were crucial components of an uneven and contradictory process of Balkan modernization. That was the central historical function of Tito's rule.

For a multiethnic state to be stable over the long term, it is necessary that the historical narratives of the constituent peoples be purged of mutual resentment, mutual recrimination and mutual blame, so that the constituent peoples do not subscribe to narratives in which they define each other as “the Enemy” (Ramet 2004). After Tito's death, the main historical narratives were gradually revised. The violent breakup of Yugoslavia, which was not inevitable, was also determined and legitimized by the new nationalistic historical narratives. The “founding fathers” of the new Balkan nation-states need new nationalistic historical narratives. While the historical narratives of Tito's era focused on the suffering of the working class under capitalism, the new nationalist narratives focused on the victimization of one's own nation in the communist Yugoslavia. Clearly, these new narratives demonized Tito’s federal system. The final result of the destruction of Tito's state was the re-balkanization of the West Balkans.

The official communist past was not only a resource of Tito's power, but also a very active component in the making of peace in the Balkans from 1945 to 1991. The extent and character of Tito's federal multi-nationalism can be clarified by mentioning some historical examples. Tito's Balkan multi-nationalism should be differentiated from the ecumenical and civilization version of multi-ethnicity carried by the conquests of Alexander the Great or by the expansion of Christianity. To this extent, it falls behind processes of a similar kind, such as Napoleon's expansion of Enlightenment ideas by means of the war at the beginning of the 19th century. Balkan multi-nationalism was limited to the territory of only one state, not a wider region like today's Western Europe, for example.

Another reason why Tito's multi-nationalism differed from the abovementioned historical examples was the use of major external enemies: fascism, Stalinism and western capitalism. Depending on the foreign or domestic situation, Yugoslav state propaganda switched its focus
from one of these enemies to the other. The fear and animosity towards these enemies were used to keep the communist party together and to gain popular support among the masses.

Tito's greatest achievement was the creation of a balance of power between Yugoslavia's many nationalities, wrote Ingrao (1996). Hobsbaum added that socialism was the golden period for many people in the Balkans (Hobsbaum 2002, 420). However, in the later part of his long rule, Tito’s charisma blocked the development of other alternative means of state cohesion. After his death and the disappearance of his party, the very strong integrative role of Tito’s cult caused emptiness in state cohesion, so that erosion took place much faster than it would have if the cult had been weaker.

The peasant heritage of the party leader was a symbol of the radical changes in social structure, i.e., the acceleration of horizontal and vertical mobility, which is an important aspect of modernization. The accelerated post-war development was facilitated by the state's and Tito's respectability in the world. Tito's funeral provided no small evidence of this respectability, being probably the greatest gathering of chiefs of state in the history of mankind.

The conservative side of Tito’s charisma had fewer long-term impacts than the modernizing effects of his progressive side mentioned above. Uncritical praising and admiration for the leader of a Bolshevik party caused an irrational idolatry of an infallible savior. Tito was described as “the offspring of centuries,” “our all-embracing love”; someone who “teaches us how to recognize the future,” whose “name heals,” who “is eternal”; and, we are told, that “history owes him.” All of these appeared in euphoric eulogies. In the official discourse, basically secular Marxist ideology provided some counter-balance against his irrational deification. Belief in the leader's infallibility fed the illusion of the party's infallibility as well, and thus prevented open discussions of state policies.

The extraordinary cult of the infallible leader maintained the inferior and servile mentality of the top party cadre. Loyalty to the leader and the party was rewarded with a system of privileges for the top cadre. The institutionalized preference for party members prevented non-member experts from having access to management positions. Thus, equality before the law was denied, while mediocrity among the loyal was encouraged. In socio-political terms the apologetic ideological discourse curbed a critical spirit, while encouraging the development of an unproductive apologetic attitude to authority in culture as a whole. Only ideologically correct thought was considered constructive, especially during Tito's conservative phase in the 1970s. A dogmatic cult became an integral part of state rituals and political socialization, which strengthened uncritical thought and deference to authority in general. Tito's cult was especially enforced in the army and the party, somewhat less so in daily propaganda, the work place and the arts. The more important ideological unity was for the functioning of an institution, the more this cult was dogmatized and imposed.

_Balkanistica_ 20 (2007)
Conclusion

As late as 1962, the eminent British historian C.A. McCartney claimed that many observers were convinced the Balkan region's best interests required “the creation of some larger multinational state or states with special institutions appropriate to the special conditions of the area.” Three decades later, BBC journalist Misha Glenny ventured that the ideal long-term solution to Yugoslavia's problems might be the establishment of new multiethnic confederations (Ingrao 1996). Finally, only a multinational entity could hope to end the century-long conflict born of nation-states and its intentionally imprecise borders.

Tito’s contribution to the solution of the ethnic problems in the Balkans was important. As a pragmatic politician, Tito managed to keep the Yugoslav ethnic groups together in a common state for the longest period of time. He gave to the idea of the Yugoslav nation its longest state form. In the history of the Left, he will be remembered as a ruler who, in the framework of his times, tried to democratize socialism (with a self-management model). This attempt was inspired by the direct democratic plebeian tradition of socialism far more than by a search for an institutionally and legally regulated distribution of power. In a relatively conflict-free way and with the help of the ruling party, Tito developed a specific regime of personal power and then became its captive, convinced that his life-long rule was the irreplaceable core of integration. Despite the civil war and the downfall of Yugoslavia, Tito's immeasurable personal power will remain shadowed by a demonstrated modernizing historical achievement. The peoples of the Balkans should try to rediscover the forgotten benefits of their multinational past and confront nationalism. In this sense, Taylor’s question in the title of this article is not rhetorical.
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