

**THE NEW PATTERNS OF STATE CONTROL: THE STATE AND
CIVIC EDUCATION IN YUGOSLAVIA**

By Slobodanka Nedovic

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Introduction: Education and/or Indoctrination

It is a truism that society educates in order to fulfil its needs. The importance of education was recognized very early, in the dawn of the history of modern societies. The proponents of the French enlightenment believed it to be both a necessary and sufficient precondition for progress of humankind. Education was one of the first responsibilities that modern states recognized as their own--both in terms of regulation and of provision.

The final product of a process of education (formal, i. e. institutionalized and informal), integrated in a wider process of socialization, should be a citizen function for a given society; the more successful the socialization, the less need for repressive measures of social control which are unpopular and costly. Although this stands for each and every society (democratic as well as authoritarian) there are important distinctions between efforts to educate and efforts to indoctrinate. The former characterizes democratic, the latter authoritarian (totalitarian) societies (regimes). In fact, the most serious problem in the domain of civic (i. e. political) education, if it is to be truly authentic political education, is how to resist the temptation to indoctrinate? In order to resist it, one should first be able to recognize indoctrination for what it is. Of course, not every teaching of a doctrine can be characterized as indoctrination. Indoctrination begins when a teacher tries to win over those being taught, to make them followers of a given doctrine. Indoctrination can be recognized by what is being taught as well as by how it is being taught.

Let us consider the content first. Indoctrination can be recognized when:

- a partisan doctrine is propagated in the guise of teaching;
- only those facts which are in favor of the given doctrine are presented, or when facts are falsified in order to corroborate the doctrine;
- the doctrine is being presented as the only one existing or even the only possible one;
- one value is exalted at the detriment of others;

- hatred is propagated by means of teaching;
- violence is advocated as a means to implement a doctrine.

In terms of method, i.e., how the teaching is being accomplished, indoctrination exists when:

- the arguments used are those of authority (a particular author's or teacher's own);
- it is not considered necessary for students to comprehend what they need to learn (rather, they memorize).

II

The Case of Former Yugoslavia

There is no question about education in former Yugoslavia being overtly conceived as indoctrination, with Marxism as the official doctrine of the Communist state. Even in the more relaxed and ideologically less militant era of Titoism following the break with Stalin in 1948, there was no doubt about the necessity of giving new generations the proper (i.e., Marxist) education. Educators (teachers and text-book writers) were obliged to base their teaching and writing on the grounds of Marxist theory. Also, there were comprehensive programs of so-called *youth political schools* conceived and organized as extra-curricular activities in high schools, in factories, and in local communities. Attendance was voluntary, but for young people with aspirations, particularly with political ambitions, those schools were the well known launching ramp. Still, the attendants were a significant minority, and most of the young people were never exposed to a systematic presentation of Marxist doctrine.

This model underwent changes with the big educational reform in the mid-seventies, following the radical constitutional change. The author of this high school reform was the important Party ideologist, university professor and member of the Central Committee of Yugoslav League of Communist, Stipe Shuvar, and the reform became known as Shuvar's Reform.

The main idea was to eradicate differences between the "gymnasium" type of high school that gave pupils four years of general (i.e., classic) education without preparing them for any particular kind of job. It was understood that they would continue their education at universities. Less prestigious schools educated for particular semi-professional jobs (electricians, nurses, technicians, librarians, etc.) and also for crafts (hairdressers, masons, carpenters, etc.). Gymnasiums were abolished, all the high-schools were to prepare young people to enter the labor force immediately after graduation and then gain higher levels of education through what was known in Marxist tradition as permanent education while gainfully employed.

Supposedly, all the workers would work and study at universities. The ideological orthodoxy behind the reform was obvious: no more privileged gymnasium pupils, no more transmission of social inequalities by means of the educational system, everyone is given an equal starting point, etc. *Coup de grace* in this ideological revival came with the introduction of Marxism as an obligatory subject during two school years of high school, and also in all schools in all universities.

From the very beginning Marxism was conceived as an ideological indoctrination, and far less as an academic field of study. That can be verified by the fact that people with very different academic and professional backgrounds suddenly became professors of Marxism. In high schools, they were often geographers, historians, sociologists, sometimes even physical fitness or household management teachers.

However, the whole strategy backfired. Marxism was ridiculed by pupils and students, or hated, but it never entered their lives as it was meant to--as the basis for their world view. I remember, at the time, one of our influential weekly magazines published an interview with Arthur Miller. On the topic of religious instruction in American schools, this is how he explained his surprising pro attitude: if you want children to hate church, religion and even God himself, then this is the best way to do it - make religious instruction obligatory and give grades for it. Official ideologists in Yugoslavia never got the message.

I can testify to my students' complete ignorance of even the most notorious Marxist ideas at the moment of their entering the School of Law in Belgrade. And this was the case with the quite unrepresentative sample, for these were the young people supposedly interested in social and political sciences! It is not that they opposed Marxism from whatever stand point--they were completely and absolutely ignorant of what Marxist doctrine was.

On the other hand, a vacuum was created where social values and ideals should have stood. There was nothing offered to replace the Marxist value system, there was no alternative explanatory theory to Marxist theory. By the beginning of the eighties, generations of young people knew perfectly well what they stood against: Communism which they equaled with Marxism (about which they knew nothing), and almost no idea what they stood for. Of the world they lived in they created two sets of "truths." One was for public (i.e. school) requirements, consisting of repeating verbally what was memorized in school. The other was for private use, containing generalizations of their everyday life and personal experiences, of what they learned in their families, from friends, films, books, rock culture. Private and public were worlds apart. They became perfect little masters in keeping those two sets apart, never making mistakes in mixing them. This situation, morally quite problematic, was accepted as, if not entirely desirable, then at least a quite tolerable and acceptable state of affairs. Very few questioned the hypocrisy it created. So it happened that corruption replaced unsuccessful socialization and unnecessary repression.

Let me draw your attention to one further aspect of socialization in former Yugoslavia. What I want to highlight here is the fact that not only was the Communist regime authoritarian, but so was society. Communism was established in a very traditional patriarchal society, with a strict hierarchy based on dominance as the main feature of all social structures and relations. The inherited authoritarian structure of the society was only reinforced during the Communist period. It was not transparent, though, but disguised with self-management, decentralization, and federal structure. So good was the disguise, that its deeply authoritarian character eluded even the most lucid observers of Yugoslav society. One of those, an honest investigator, university professor of psychology, Nikola Rot, published in the early seventies, results of the research conducted in one of the provincial Serbian high schools. In the research he had applied (among other means) famous scales created by Adorno and his collaborators, for measuring authoritarian traits in personality. The results were so unexpected, appalling to such a degree, that Rot, unable to believe his own results, could only suggest (by way of a conclusion) that scales have become obsolete, and in need of revision!

Having sketched quite summarily the situation in former Yugoslavia, let me now turn to the ways in which things have (not) changed in the present one.

III

The Case of Serbia in Present Yugoslavia

1. Background & Political and Social Change

Fundamental changes within one society, changes in its basic political structures and values, when they occur, demand equally radical changes in the process of education. So, a broader question should obviously precede the question of education. Were there really radical changes in Yugoslavia? Are things really radically different?

Although it is obvious that social structure in Serbia has changed profoundly, I am not convinced that there are equally fundamental changes in the political sphere. Of course, this is not to say that everything is as it used to be, but in my opinion, the most important aspect--the authoritarian character of the regime has not diminished. Quite to the contrary.

After a few decades of the relaxed, more open, and even liberal atmosphere of Yugoslav "merry socialism," we have witnessed the new wave of ideologization. This time, instead of Communism, Yugoslav society (or societies) became infected with nationalism.

I cannot even try to elaborate here on all the reasons why Yugoslav peoples found nationalism so attractive. For some, it was the chance to rectify the grievances from the civil war of 1941-45. For others, it was the most radical opposition to Communism.¹ For many, it was the only coherent ideology offered in the political market other than Communism, and there was a great and urgent need for *some* world view. Democracy by and large was not perceived as an alternative. It only meant that we shall have freedom, but freedom for what? To do what? To struggle for what? Gain what?

In many ways the case of Yugoslavia was different from other East European countries. People in Yugoslavia were not kept away from the material riches of the West. We had our own consumer society. Nor were we isolated from cultural, scientific, and artistic trends in the West. You could not win over the youth in Yugoslavia by promising open borders, rock music, punk, American movies, or Coca-Cola. They already had all that and more. In general, democracy as a goal is not easily translatable in simple terms to people who are not being deprived or repressed on the large scale. Furthermore, democracy implied not only individual freedom, but also individual responsibility for all the consequences of that freedom being exercised. In many ways, the paternalistic state was preferable to such a state of affairs. Last but not least, collectivist ideology of both patriarchy and Communism was much more easily replaced by another such (collectivist) ideology (i.e. nationalism) than with any individualism of the Western liberal type. Besides, many people did not see any contradiction or conflict in fighting for both democracy and a national state.

Whatever the explanation, there we were in the late eighties with a new ideology and a new task of indoctrination for all national elites. This time, it took a much more dangerous form, for it was not limited to schools and other institutionalized agencies of socialization. It permeated all of life. The press, TV, music², acclaimed scientists, artists, and personalities from show business all joined political parties in exalting the value of nation, tradition, and a history of greatness. The few cautioning, sobering voices that

¹It is worth mentioning here that even in the most liberal periods, there was one political verdict that almost guaranteed a prison sentence. It was the verdict of nationalism. Once branded as a nationalist, a person could forget any idea of promotion (public or professional). It is of no wonder that many of Tito's "nationalists," sought promotion outside the established channels, thus being the first to organize politically as the opposition to the Communists. They were also the only real martyrs for the cause, having served by no means short sentences in the Communist prisons.

²We were systematically exposed to what became known as "newly composed folk-music." There were two main streams in this new kind of popular songs: one, very nationalistic, with vulgar patriotic content in very bad taste, overtly propagating hatred for Albanians, Muslims, and Croats, and inciting violence, was sung by men dressed in military style, often even armed; the other, vulgarly exploits eroticism, or to be more precise, pornography, with more than half naked singers singing erotic love songs in, to make the things completely absurd, Turkish and Arab (definitely un-Serbian) melody and rhythm.

The awful thing is that these singers became new idols for young people. The long tradition of YU rock and YU jazz was almost completely forgotten. The UN sanctions helped this process very much. Isolated, the young people reacted in a way that was predictable: if you don't want us, we certainly don't want you; if you label all of us barbarians and criminals, we are most certainly not going to participate in your culture. There was the clear manifestation of "rallying around the flag" syndrome generated by the UN sanctions.

managed to reach the public were ignored or more commonly, publicly crucified, exposed as traitors and foreign agents. Their private lives and family histories were investigated and threatened. The people were subjected to the full blast indoctrination in the tradition of Goebbels and Stalin.³

Although the process was more or less identical in all former Yugoslavia's republics, for obvious reasons I shall limit my further presentation to the case of Serbia.

The beginning of the nineties brought armed conflicts; first in Croatia, then in Bosnia. Then came the UN sanctions. I will not even try to engage in the analysis of causes and consequences in the national and international political scene. Instead, I would like to draw your attention to what I think are the less known changes in social relations and structures in Serbian society in this period.⁴

Nationalistic euphoria could not be sustained for long. It was not forgotten, but it lost its initial force. With the introduction of a multi-party system, differences in the "monolithic body" of "all Serbs around the world" became obvious. Also, the armed conflict sobered many hot nationalists. Many of the prominent leaders of "national revival" openly distanced themselves from the horrid consequences of their heated public proclamations in previous years. "This is not what we wanted" became a very popular excuse. It was all well and good singing nationalist songs, drumming the nationalist drums, and waving flags. But sending your own son to a bloody massacre, or going there yourself, was quite another matter.

Many nationalists were horrified by atrocities committed in the conflict, although the information on those was scarce and came only through informal channels. The Serbian media were censored, the UN sanctions prevented the foreign press from entering Yugoslavia, telephone communications with Croatia and non-Serb areas of Bosnia were cut off at the very beginning of the conflict. The average citizen of Serbia was exposed to systematic brain washing by a constant flow of information on massacres and crimes committed against Serbian civilian population and none on those committed by the Serbian armed forces. Still, the initial enthusiasm was lost.

Political turbulence was accompanied by serious changes in the economic situation and living standard of the population. Here is a little data which indicates the situation in the four year period from 1989 to 1993. Since then, I assume we've had more of the same.

³I remember a conversation I had in 1990 with my old friend from student days. At the time, she was a judge, a Serb married to an Albanian Muslim, using his--very characteristic--surname. Her small son, a seven year old first grader, returning from school one day, asked her if both her parents were Serbs. After hearing the affirmative answer, he just sighed very deeply and concluded sadly: "Oh, how good for you." He persistently refused any further conversation on the topic.

⁴Some references to "politics and political" are unavoidable, of course.

Yugoslavia has lost over 60 % of its GNP. GNP per capita dropped from \$2,148 in 1989 to around \$700 by the end of 1993. Here one should be reminded that the Security Council imposed sanctions against Yugoslavia in May, 1992.

In 1994 the head count ratio (poverty index) in Serbia was 35.6%, compared to 6.23% in 1990. An additional one third of the population is now potentially poor, because of the very small distance from the poverty line. Poverty deficit for central Serbia was almost negligent in 1990--0.4% of the GNP, but has risen to 2.7% in the beginning of 1994. In other words, the amount of money sufficient to eliminate poverty in Central Serbia (under the condition of ideally targeted social assistance) was around \$91 million in 1990, and it has risen to \$132 million in 1994. And the loss in the GNP should be recalled.

In 1994, there were over 750,000 persons looking for employment, and almost 900,000 of the employed--more than 40% --were in the ambiguous status (the invention of the present regime) of "compulsory holidays."

In 1993 economic catastrophe hit Serbians. By the end of 1992, the annual inflation rate in FRY stood at 20,000%, just an indication, as it transpired, of what was to come. In November 1993 it had reached 286,000 million percent at the annual level, reaching an all time high in January 1994 when the monthly rate alone came to a staggering 313 million per cent. Let me give an example of what it meant on an individual level: my monthly salary at that time was around one and a half dollars. The shops, supermarkets were empty of merchandise, one could buy only the most basic stuff and for that one went to the black market. Central heating in Belgrade provided a temperature around 16°C, and there was regular electricity black-outs, which left us in darkness for 8-12 hours every day. Some parts of Serbia and Belgrade were left without electricity for days on end. The public transportation system collapsed, and gasoline for private cars was obtainable only on the black market at exorbitant prices. These are not conditions favorable to activism of any kind. One is engaging tremendous quantities of time and energy in pure and simple physical survival. Daily life became a struggle for mere survival, so political issues figured less prominently in the average person's mind. Then in the beginning of 1994 the new Program of Monetary Reconstruction was launched. It restored some confidence and hope, but not for long, and not among the majority of intellectuals. Economists denounced it as short-timed and basically a well conceived sham.

Serbia is changing its social structure, getting close to the Latin American model with a few very rich getting richer, and many poor getting poorer. About 90% of the population is either living in poverty, or is imminently threatened by poverty. On the other hand, there is a new financial elite: *nouveau riches* consisting mostly of people engaged in illegal or semi-legal business, directors-managers of big socially or state owned enterprises, and very few successful businessmen in the western sense of the word. They are very well connected with the ruling political elite, and actually those groups tend to form one power elite.

The social structure emerging in Serbia could never be a favorable background for democracy, because the middle class that is always the most ardent keeper of democracy and the most important factor of stability, is being devastated.

In such circumstances Serbia went through the rapid process of social disintegration, acquiring all the attributes of anomie society, in Durkheimian sense.

2. Serbia: Civic Education or Political Indoctrination or....?

There is no doubt that education in communist Yugoslavia despite its political and ideological proclamations⁶ favored heteronomy, obedience, and intolerance as opposed to democratic values of autonomy, independence, and tolerance. It would seem obvious that the introduction of democratic political institutions should demand the reverse. Unfortunately, as was mentioned, institutional political changes occurred simultaneously with Serbia's involvement (no matter if indirect) in armed conflicts in former Yugoslavia. The regime's need to build up "civilian morale" favorable to this involvement prevented those changes. The unintended consequence of UN sanctions--"the rallying around the flag" syndrome-- actually supported the regime's endeavors. Of course, this is not to say that some changes have not occurred. Let me point to some of them.

- Effects of the Shuvar's reform were abolished. "Gymnasium" was re-established. Marxism is no longer an obligatory course in schools. In secondary schools it was replaced with something hardly translatable: Constitutional Basis of Social, Economic, and Political Arrangements. As the reforms in the seventies became known as Shuvar's Reform, this new subject is generally referred to as Mira's Subject.⁷ The fact that the same professors are now teaching the new subject is revealing enough.

- Nationalist ideology found its way into many school subjects. In Geography, by defining borders of our new state (whether to include or not Serbian Republics outside FR Yugoslavia?). In History, by rewriting the role of the nationalist Chetnik Movement in World War II and by pointing to the "civil war" character of

⁵Statistical data used in the text are published in S. Mihajlovic: "The Sacrificed Generation," *Sociologija* (Belgrade), Vol.XXXVI (1994), No. 3.

⁶Self-management and delegate system as a "form of direct democracy" supposedly required citizens to develop autonomous and democratic personalities.

⁷Mira being the nickname of Mirjana Markovic, Ph.D., recently elected member of Russian Academy of Social Sciences, university professor of Marxism (recently changed to "Sociology"), leader of the present opposition party--Communist Alliance, and *accidentally* the wife of Serbia's President Slobodan Milosevic.

what for decades was taught to be "the glorious liberation war."⁸ In Literature, by disputes over ethnic origins of famous Yugoslav writers, etc. In many academic fields, writers turned to research of "our national legacy," even if sometimes it meant writing highly elaborated essays on minor Serbian thinkers of the past.⁹

- Institutional structure of the school system changed towards more centralized and much more direct state control. The previous regime could count on the highly efficient Party system of "democratic centralism" and discipline, and could allow the apparent high degree of independence of state control. The new regime had to use a more direct approach, having the state apparatus as the only efficient means of control. The Serbian Ministry of Education was granted powers far surpassing those in the previous regime. And yet, in this field the regime clearly showed its inefficiency. To my knowledge, the only public protest that had full effect in Serbia, was the one enacted by high school (gymnasium) pupils, concerning changes in the graduation system. They organized a general strike, went into the streets, stayed there a few days-- and triumphed. Their demands were fulfilled and the reform was postponed.¹⁰

The effect of nationalist indoctrination began to wear off as the armed conflict went on. It seems that the year 1989 could be considered "critical"--the year when indoctrination reached its peak. Here are the results of measuring attitudes on the scale "open - closed to the world" among the young people in Serbia:

	1988	1989	1993
Open	73%	29%	54%
Mixed Attitudes	17%	31%	37%
Closed	10%	40%	9%

This tells us that the percentage of young people in Serbia who preferred Serbian society to be closed, and not open to the world, dropped in only four years from 40% to just 9%, with more than one third of respondents (37%) ambivalent in this respect.

⁸Incidentally, in the same year in which the whole world celebrated the 50th anniversary of the victory over fascism, Serbia went through the process of denigrating the role of its anti-fascist movement, and "re-evaluating" the role of the collaborators with the occupational forces.

⁹Often though, this was not entirely the matter of choice. Under UN sanctions, unable to keep in touch with current trends in their respective fields, without financial means to conduct any field research, many writers turned to what was available as research material - history archives.

¹⁰The matter of dispute was the new program for graduation exams. Although it is true that pupils (and schools) were informed of the change late in the school year, the sad fact remains that the basic complaint came down to "there will be much more work."

The fact that all this did not hurt then Minister of Education tells a lot about Serbian "democracy."

Furthermore, in 1993 only 2.4% of the young population identified themselves with members of their own ethno-nation, and for 84% ethno-national criterion was irrelevant in selecting friends. Only 9.6% were ready to volunteer in the armed conflict. The research conducted among high-school pupils and university students in Belgrade showed that:

- a) only 8% were satisfied with political situation in the country, 90% were not;
- b) only 9% were satisfied with the country's economy, 88% were not;
- c) only 10% were satisfied with the possibilities for employment, 87% were not.

However, this general dissatisfaction was disoriented, for respondents most often could not specify the roots of their dissatisfaction or determine factors that contributed to it in the greatest degree. They had no idea of possible action to alleviate such a state of affairs. 46% of respondents stated that they were confused, and could not understand most of what was happening in the society. Only 38% thought they might understand "what this was all about."

Here is how the young in Serbia responded to the following statement: The fact that today there are so many different opinions on what is proper and ethical, and what is not, confuses me.

	1988	1989	1993
True	56%	61%	51%
Ambivalent	27%	25%	17%
Untrue	17%	14%	32%

The research of *value anomie* among the young in Serbia showed enormously increased disorientation. By the end of seventies, 24% of the young, and by the end of eighties, 75% (a percentage unheard of in the world) were trapped in *anomie*. The percentage fell to 34% in 1993, but there was still an enormous percentage (52%) of those who were neither oriented, nor disoriented, but "somewhere in between."

Bearing in mind that confusion was far less noticeable in values regulating private life and relations within primary groups (family, friends), it could be concluded that the most serious erosion, or more precisely, confusion, occurred in those values that govern our public life and fall in the domain of civic education. I could now finish the unfinished subtitle above with *disorientation*.

Dissatisfied with their society, unwilling to accept the imposed dominant ideology of nationalism and unable to create any satisfactory world view, as the background for action towards change, the young people decided they wanted to leave the country. When asked about their plans after graduation, 56% answered they planned to leave the country. To the direct question, "If you had an opportunity, would you go to another county to live and work there permanently or for a long time?" only 15% stated that they

would not, 24% couldn't say, and 61% stated that they would leave. As the famous graffiti on Belgrade's University building put it, "I am waiting to graduate in order to emigrate."

Was all this the result of design? Was all this certain policy? I could not say. But it certainly helped to maintain political *status quo* in Serbia. Sudden and radical changes in the policy of the Serbian leadership demanded disoriented followers. The political leadership was not based on any deliberate ideology, had no roots in any coherent world view, but followed the transitory demands of expediency. What started as the policy of continuity under the motto "And after Tito - Tito!" developed into a policy of hate speech and militant nationalism, to be replaced with conciliatory peace talk and politics of peace. Changes as radical as those would be unacceptable both to an autonomous public and to fully indoctrinated followers. Yet, it was possible to manipulate citizens who were disoriented and confused into following the leadership whichever way it chose to lead. So, to return to the very beginning of this paper, the needs or interests of Serbian society as defined by its political leadership are best served by the citizen who is neither politically educated, nor indoctrinated, but disoriented. As the civil society in Serbia is still not developed enough to act as a counter-power to political power it can not influence civic education in any significant degree.