

PhD Thesis Review

Title: The Birth and Death of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia: Developing polypeitarchic history

Author: Srdjan Jovanović

By Margarita Karamihova

I. General Comments:

The submitted thesis presents comprehensive examination of complex problems related to comparative study of the creation and breakup of two states - Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. The thesis consists of introduction and eleven chapters, gradually presenting the approached theme, *Endnotes*, *Bibliography* and *Primary Sources*.

The *Introduction* consists of largely commented questions of neutrality of a researcher; of History as discipline and of language and expressions before the author reaches *The Topic*. The focus he puts is on the interdisciplinary nature of his thesis.

The relatively ambitious aim to develop a new polypeitarchic history is stated in the *Chapter I* devoted to Methodology. The necessity of post-positivist interdisciplinary structural comparative synthesis and triangulation, with a strong emphasis on the interdisciplinary (p. 24), as approach is well defined. *Chapter II* introduces briefly the creation and breakup of the two states - Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. *Chapter III* focuses on attempts new common histories (i.e. new national identities) to be invented. The influential idea of a pan-Slavic unity has been explored. *Chapter IV* focuses on how individuals of the elite and their ideas shaped the course of history in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. *Chapter V* places the processes in question in a wider international frame discussing the "mud house syndrome" as a core factor for establishment and collapse of both countries. *Chapter VI* demonstrates an attempt to analyze political events using results of gender and sexuality studies. *Chapter VII* explores differences shaping societies in question with a special stress on regionalist theories. *Chapter VIII* follows the *code of difference* exploring the linguistic situations and different linguistic policies. *Chapter IX* is devoted to religious differences and religion as driving force of destruction. *Chapter X* is focused on the break up of Yugoslavia with special attention on Macedonia and Kosovo cases.

The thesis ends with chapter *Instead of a Conclusions* where it is shown that the proposed objectives were achieved, and directions for further research are identified.

The *Bibliography* contains references to relevant papers from studied and related domains. The thesis demonstrates a solid understanding of the state-of-the-art in the research area and the knowledge of the most important and current literature.

Publication activity of the author: There are two books, thirteen publications, related to the thesis and many other publications which concern different topics. All are prestigious publications in international conferences and peer reviewed journals. So it can be stated that the results of dissertation come through international review process.

The formal arrangement of the thesis is satisfactory and as to my knowledge of the language I consider the thesis very good.

The results are discussed in relation to the research of others, and the thesis demonstrates a good understanding of the implications of the work in a broader scientific context.

Conclusion: PhD thesis has fulfilled all stated aims, fits into dissertation area and deals with very perspective problems of post-socialist studies.

II. Specific Comments:

page 14: It will be nice if author can provide proofs that unlike in formal Yugoslavia, the communism really ended in Czechoslovakia;

pages 70-80: The statistics used for stating differences in sexual behavior of both countries' citizens are not satisfactorily representative in terms to support the working hypothesis;

page 78 - 80: The thesis will gain in balance and the conclusions will be more adequate if the information concerning the rapes during the war will take into account wider sources of information.

Footnote xxiii, page 79: Does not contribute to clarification of mass rapes mythology.

Page 109: The following statement: "To blunt it down, regions in which religion – a byproduct, a *mistake* – is strong, *less reasoning, less rationality, less education, as well as more violence are always present*" needs a revision. In my opinion it repeats Marxist (evolutionary) philosophy borrowing arguments from evolutionary psychology.

Page 109: It will be nice if author can provide relevant qualitative data to show if the policies toward Eastern Orthodox clericalization of Serb society are successful in influencing its members. The statistics cited on page 112 in my opinion (as an ethnologist using

predominantly qualitative data) do not support the idea of high level of religiousness. May be it will be supportive to analyze the statistics keeping in mind that in contemporary Serbia religion became very important identity marker which does not mean that declared affiliation by default equals religiousness.

The academic tradition to finish every chapter with clear short conclusion may contribute to better understanding of author's findings.

III. Evaluation:

The results are quite original and certainly further advance our current understanding of post-socialist countries in question. Furthermore, many problems remain open in this area, so this thesis is certainly not a dead end and will likely engender much future research. On the basis of author research activities is possible to state that Srdjan Jovanović has enough research erudition, required to obtain the academic title.

If all is addressed and answered appropriately to the issues and comments raised and provided above, I would say the Ph.D. thesis written and submitted by Srdjan Jovanović can be accepted and doctoral degree can be awarded to author after successful defense.

Again, I appreciate your kind invitation as external reviewer on the valuable thesis. Please feel free to contact me if you have any question or concern on the review report.

Sincerely,

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