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NEW BOOKS REVIEW

BUCHBESPRECHUNGEN

THE BALKANS - BETWEEN RETRADITIONALIZATION AND MODERNIZATION*

At the round table discussion *New World Order and the Balkans* organized at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš in June 1999, twenty scientists from Yugoslavia and abroad tried to give their view of the concept "New Balkans", on the platform of true political, civil and national equality, multiethnic and multicultural coexistence of peoples and states, as well as the position of Yugoslavia within the Balkans, after it tragically faced the both sides of the "New World Order". Their contributions have been compiled in a collection of papers of the same title, issued by the Faculty of Philosophy and the Institute of Sociology, within the framework of the research macroproject named *Regional Cultural Cooperation in the Balkans* and under the auspices of the Ministry of Science and Technology of the Republic of Serbia.

The main interest in *Milorad Božić's* paper are the great destruction, suffering of civilians and social phenomena, as well as economic and social consequences of NATO attack on Yugoslavia. The author emphasizes that the damages inflicted on economic and civilian facilities in the bombing of Yugoslavia are by far greater than the military ones in the domain of material losses (the value of destroyed military infrastructure, equipment, arms, etc.). Numerous industrial facilities, flats, business premises and public utility infrastructure, health care, educational and cultural facilities have been completely destroyed or damaged. Moreover, there is a considerable indirect economic damage: decrease in national product and disruption of continuity in economic development, unemployment rate rise, deterioration of climate for attracting foreign investments, etc. The numerous social problems in the country from before the aggression were multiplied and aggravated in the post-war period, as the author points out, which requires an extended help of humanitarian organizations and other countries in both financial and temporal respect.

Predrag Simić sees the main motive of the invasion on Yugoslavia by the United States of America in the need to strengthen the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the leading role not only among allies but also among the main partners and potential rivals such as Russia. According to him, "the culprit" for the failure of these predetermined political aims is to be found in the unwillingness of the American public and international community to support the escalation of war, outside the UN Charter and against the interests of Russia and China. On the grounds of the interpretation of Jan Oberg, the director of Swedish Transnational Foundation, possible great consequences the

* *New World Order and the Balkans*, Faculty of Philosophy / Institute of Sociology, Niš, 1999, pp. 1-278.

aggression on Yugoslavia may have on the leading role of the West in the modern world have been analyzed in the paper, as well: a) endangered credibility and further expansion of NATO, b) imperiled common foreign and defense policy of European Union, c) deterioration of global economic crisis and spreading of social unrest, hatred and terrorism in the region, d) devaluation of international law and weakening of the importance of United Nations, OSCE, non-governmental organizations and other international institutions, e) "imperial overstretch" and the beginning of the decline of Western power, etc.

Jelena Guskova from the Institute of Slavic studies and *Vladimir Rukavisnikov* from the Institute of Socio-political Research of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAN) focus their interests on Russian foreign politics on the Balkans and the shift in Russian public opinion of NATO and USA. Russia has been predominantly criticized for its "anaemic" foreign policy concept and want of independence and sureness in the negotiation process for peace in Yugoslavia. The reasons for a decrease in importance of Russian role in the Balkans is to be seen in the lack of unity in running the country, inconsistency in solution finding and permanent regard of US positions in strategy and tactics shaping. Russian television stations and the press were very ardent in covering what was going on in and around Kosovo and Yugoslavia from the very beginning of the conflict. Numerous opinion polls in Russia can illustrate the fact that the Russian people is well informed on the officially declared objectives of NATO in the war with our country, but most of the people do not trust this propaganda, and they are much concerned because of the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization towards central and eastern Europe. According to the opinion poll conducted by ROMIR voting agency, towards the end of March 1999, 74% of the interviewees were of the opinion that Russia was supposed to help our country in the time of crisis, and 88% of them blamed NATO for ignoring international law and institutions. As early as April 1999, a great majority of Russians, 92% were firmly against the air-raids on Yugoslavia, whereas only 2% of the interviewees approved of NATO politics.

The lack of self-consciousness in the Balkan nations and their political élité, as well as their liability to be influenced by technological, economical, cultural, informative and political imperialism has been treated as an important question by *Vjekoslav Butigan*. Civilization factionalism, cultural separation and political disunity, inadequate economical integration of the Balkan nations and historical mistrust among them are the main obstacles to the establishment of regional order in the Balkans as a civilization background for a rapid social development. IN the author's opinion, this servile role of the Balkan countries in the new international order, i.e. in respect to the Western hegemonic culture, can be overcome if own political culture is imbued with the spirit of tolerance, coexistence and integration.

It is an opinion common to all the authors that the Balkan countries must discover the formula of cooperation in the realization of the current process of economic growth and prosperity in south-east Europe. They all have to pass the test of surpassing differences and conflicts and to opt for the way of cooperation and development, the only one which can take them to Europe and the world. Otherwise, the centrifugal forces will move them to the periphery of European integration.

Dragan Todorović