



**FAMILY STABILITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT--WHAT WE HAVE
LOST AND GAINED, AND WHAT SHOULD BE DONE:
THE CASE OF THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA**

by

Alexandra Posarac
Research Fellow
Institute of Economic Sciences
Belgrade, YUGOSLAVIA

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Family stability and economic development - what
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The Case of The Former Yugoslavia

*" If there be righteousness in the heart,
there will be beauty in the character. If
there is beauty in the character there
will be harmony in the home. If there is
harmony in the home, there will be order
in the nation. Where is order in each
nation there will be peace in the world."*

Very old Chinese Proverb

1. Introduction

Family is one of the core institutions on which our civilization is based; the one between very few that survived millenniums of human history. One could almost say that family is a natural phenomenon¹ which enables mankind's survival. Having in mind this on one hand, and some unfavorable changes in the forms and patterns of family life which have especially occurred during the last 40 years, on the other, one must ask oneself whether we are losing the family as a social institution, i.e. whether our civilization is becoming a civilization of selfish individuals which lack responsibility towards their posterity, i.e. individuals who are not much willing to sacrifice their comforts and habits and devote themselves to a family life. In that way, saving, protection and empowerment of the family (strong, warm, secure, protective, full of incentives for the development and

¹The ways of life which strongly resemble the human family life can be found between some other species.

freedom of each of its members) and family stability are basic preconditions for further development of our civilization.

It is commonly known that forms of families, their functions and structures, as well as the patterns of family life are determined by a very complex mixture of various determinants: biological, sociological, historical, cultural, economic conditions, morals, tradition, etc². But the fact which probably most influenced the forms, as well as patterns and stability of family life during the 20th century is economic development.

Economic development achieved during the last 90 years, especially in the Western world, caused a set of changes that significantly influenced and altered the family: movement from an extended to a nuclear family, more equal position of men and women (family mates); significant increase in the number of working women (which has opened a question concerning daily care of pre school, as well as school children), new relations between parents and their offspring(s); significant decline in the number of children per family (in some countries the situation is alarming since the natural increase rate is very low: it does not enable the renewal of population which is consequently getting older - the fact bringing lots of problems: increase in spending on pensions, i.e.

²Sometimes authorities even tried to regulate (impose) forms and patterns of family life. Remember the case of the young USSR and Alexandra Kolontai's project which basically denied the need for existence of a family as a basic social institution. The idea, of course, was quickly abandoned.

higher financial burden on younger generations, old people households, growing need for institutionalized care of the old unable to support or/and take care of themselves, etc.); increasing number of single-parent families (either due to divorce or one's own choice); higher level of living standards, etc.

In this paper I shall concentrate on the case of the former Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia represents a very interesting case since in the last fifty years of its history Yugoslav society was exposed to several drastic events and influences: The Second World War (which in Yugoslavia was also a civil war), socialist revolution, communist regime, relatively fast economic development, deep economic and political crisis, and, finally, the decay of the socialist system and disintegration of the country ending up in a war - this time ethnic³. All those events and facts significantly influenced individuals, but families were nonetheless affected.

In the beginning of this paper changes (gains and loses) in forms and patterns of family life resulting from the economic development in Yugoslavia after the Second World War (between 1945 and 1978) are summarized and briefly commented. Afterwards, changes in the social and economic situation of Yugoslav

³In Yugoslavia, there is now almost unimaginable quantity of hatred between ethnic groups which used to live together, especially between Serbs on one side and Croats and Moslems on the other. Its roots go deep into the past. Constantly satanized in Serbia through public media (particularly TV) are Croats as an ethnic group (and the other way around).

households⁴ in the period between 1979 and 1991 (the period of deep economic and political crisis which resulted in the decay of the socialist system and the disintegration of Yugoslavia, followed by an ethnic war, with some elements of a religious war) and their influence on families are explained in more detail. Finally, some proposals for family empowerment policy are made.

2. Economic development and Yugoslav family⁵:

In the period after the Second World War up to 1978, when the period of economic development in Yugoslavia ended, changes in the forms of Yugoslav family⁶, its functions and structure were

⁴In this paper terms 'family' and 'household' are used interchangeably.

⁵Thorough survey of registers at the Serbian National Library, The Library of Serbian Academy of Sciences, and the library at the Institute of Economic Sciences showed a surprising fact that a family was not of very much interest to researches in Yugoslavia. There were only few papers (mostly in the area of anthropology) concerning the family in Yugoslavia.

⁶According to the last available "Household Survey" data (Federal Statistical Office, 1990), the average Yugoslav family had 3.39 members, of which 1.11 were employed outside agriculture, 0.33 were farmers, 0.45 were pensioners, while 1.45 were children. Monthly income per capita of the average Yugoslav family in 1990 was about 226 USA \$. One half of that income came from employment in the socially owned sector, 13 percent from social transfers (mostly pensions), 7 percent from farming and self-employment, 3.5 percent from consumption in kind (production for one's own consumption), and 15 percent from reduction of savings (only major sources of income are listed). The last two items are clear signs

determined by the following dominant factors.

a) The first one is the fact that Yugoslavia after the War became a so called communist (socialist country), - with all that the fact meant⁷: new ideology; restricted influence of religion⁸ (in the case of the Orthodox church it was almost negligible); diminishing role of tradition; attempts to establish a new system of social values; emphasis on the collectivism and "organized society", new role of women⁹, etc. Family itself was not a subject of any closer interest of the communist authorities. This can be proved by the fact that in resolutions and other official documents of the

of the deep economic crisis. The average urban family (according to Yugoslav definition, urban family is a family which does not have any income in kind or in cash from farming) consisted of 3.15 members (basically two parents and one child), while the average rural family had 3.84 family members. Monthly income per capita of the average urban family was 254 USA \$. In the case of the average rural family it was 185 \$.

⁷One of the basic target of the new communist authorities was: *building a new society, and along with it, building a new man.*

⁸In Yugoslavia, Slovenians and Croats are Roman Catholics (about 30 percent of the total Yugoslavia's population), Serbs, Macedonians and Montenegrins are Orthodox (about 50 percent), while others belong to Moslem religion (mostly Serbs converted to Islam during the Turkish invasion of Serbia XIV to XIX century, and Albanians). Serbs-Moslems were given the status of a Moslem nationality by the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution.

⁹As for women, long after the war they were referred to as *comrades* (not as a wives, for example). Husbands, introducing their wives, used to say: "This is my comrade." (and the other way around).

Yugoslav communist party, family was very rarely mentioned. From time to time the term *socialist family* was used, but with no explanation what it was supposed to mean. In the very focus of the Yugoslav communists' attention was the individual, but not an individual *per se*, but as a member of a collective, of an organization, with the emphasis on the latter. The explanation for this is very simple: the most efficient way to influence individuals, their opinions and attitudes was through different collectives they belonged to. In this way (through such changed individuals) the regime indirectly influenced family life.

b) The second one is the overall economic development achieved during the 45 year's history of the so-called *Second Yugoslavia* (the First one being monarchy - 1918-1941) which resulted in significant increase in the living standard of Yugoslav population (measured by the standard economic and social development indicators). Publicly provided health care, education, child care institutions (nurseries and kindergartens), etc., as well as a variety of social transfers to the population in cash (old age, disability and survivors' pensions, child and other family allowances, attendance and assistance allowance, several types of social relief allowances, etc.), job security (there was almost no chance to be fired from work in the state-owned sector of economy - the social sector made about 90 percent of the whole economy) created the so called *socialist welfare state*, i.e. "the world of security" concerning many aspects of everyday life. This "world of security" significantly influenced the life pattern of Yugoslav

families. For example, nurseries and kindergartens allowed women to work, sick family member's care was in principle taken by health care institutions, a family did not have to worry about children's education (in principle, everyone has got a chance to attain the level of education in accordance with his abilities, wishes, and ambitions), pension and disability insurance guaranteed material security to those not able to support themselves due to their age, or working capacity, which meant less (or no) financial burden to other family members, etc. It should be noted that all those facilities were unevenly spread over the population: they were mostly distributed in favor of the urban population, and among them, in favor of those employed with the socially owned sector. The distribution of social expenditures was also pro rich, i.e. they were distributed towards the higher income groups.

c) The forced industrialization carried out till the 60s, causing fast and massive migration of population from rural areas to cities, rapidly changed the way of life of hundreds of thousands of families. The following data¹⁰ illustrate how fast the process of industrialization was, as well as how massive migration from rural to urban areas took place in Yugoslavia after the Second World War: in 1948 agricultural population made about 70 percent of the total Yugoslav population, in 1961 its share was 50 percent, and in 1981 about 19 percent (the last available figure - 1991 Population Census data have not been published yet). People

¹⁰ Population Census, different years.

were actually officially stimulated to migrate from rural to urban areas. First of all, living in a city was much easier than in the country: higher living standard, greatly subsidized rents and utilities, educational, cultural, health care, and other facilities, summer and winter holidays, more leisure time, etc. The whole development strategy concentrated on cities. Rural areas, as a rule, stayed undeveloped. Having this in mind, it is no wonder that almost everyone young enough to find a job in a city wanted to leave the inland. Resulting was the fact that many rural areas, especially mountainous, became literally deserted, i.e. left with a few old people's households (in 1981 the people whose age was 60 and above made 21.2 percent of the total agricultural population).

d) The rapid decrease in the share of agricultural population recorded between 1961 and 1981 can be explained by internal (rural - urban migration), as well as by the external migration. Namely, in this period about 1 million people left Yugoslavia for other European countries, mostly West Germany, looking for a job, due to growing unemployment in Yugoslavia.

All the above listed factors contributed to the changes in family forms, patterns of family life, functions and structure of family, etc. which occurred in Yugoslavia between 1945 and 1978. Basically, those changes do not differ very much from the changes occurring in Western countries: movement from an extended to a nuclear family, large migration from rural to urban areas (as well

as from rural, patriarchal, extended family to urban, nuclear family and way of life), more equal position of women, more working women¹¹, significant decline in number of children per family (except between Albanians and other Moslem population), increase in the number of single households¹², as well as single parent families¹³, (more free and less subordinate) relations between family members, economic independence of family members, divorces¹⁴, loosening ties between even close relatives, abandoning

¹¹In 1990 women in Yugoslavia made over 40 percent of the total employment.

¹²According to the 1981 Population Census single households made 13.1 percent (in 1971 the share was 12.9 percent) of all the households in Yugoslavia; two member households made 18.5 percent (16.3); the share of three member households was 19.7 percent (19.1); four member households made 23.8 percent (21.3); households with five members made 11 percent (12.9); and households with 6 or more members made 13.8 percent (17.6).

¹³In 1981 in Yugoslavia there were about half a million of mother headed families, 57 percent of which were with a mother and one child, 23 percent consisted of a mother and two children, and families with a mother and three or more children stood for 10 percent. At the same time, single father families made 2 percent of the total number of families (or 24.2 percent of single mother families). the structure of these families was as follows: a father with one child 57 percent; a father with two children 25 percent; and a father with three or more children 18 percent. Almost 17 percent of single mother families and 6.6 single father families were supported solely by the divorced spouse. As a rule, custody over children in the case of the divorce is given to the mother.

¹⁴The absolute number of new marriages in Yugoslavia gradually declined: from 180 thousand in 1975 to 149 thousand in 1990. As

of some traditional forms of family life, etc.

It should be noted that all those changes came as a spontaneous reaction of a family to the changing social and economic environment. Therefore, no one was concerned with those changes, and, consequently, there were no policy measures to strengthen family life, to empower and save family, i.e. measures to make easier and less dramatic necessary adjustments of the forms and patterns of family life to the process of economic development.

The lists of gains and losses (financial and non-financial) from social and economic development concerning the family life in Yugoslavia should at least include the following items - the order in which gains and losses are given does not mean their relative importance.

2.1. What we have gained: light side of the coin

1. Nuclear family (parents and their offspring(s) living in a separate residence, commonly able to support themselves.
2. Less financial and other duties towards members of the former

for divorces, their absolute number decreased from 25.1 thousand in 1975 to 19.4 thousand in 1990. Therefore, the divorce rate stayed almost unchanged. The structure of divorced marriages by the years of marriage was in 1989: up to five years of marriage - 36.6 percent; from five to nine years of marriage 22.5; 10-14 years 15.6 percent, and 15 and more 25.2 percent. About 40 percent of the divorced marriages in 1989 were childless, 33.8 percent with one child, 21.6 percent with two children, and 3.4 percent with three or more children.

extended family (parents and other relatives).

3. Higher living standard which, among other things, means that there is a lot of household facilities enabling parents to have more leisure time, i.e. to spend more time with their family (mate and children).

4. Higher level of income also allows a more relaxed family life, since poverty is usually one of the causes of family instability. (Although in some cases it keeps members of family closer to each others in struggling to overcome poverty.)

5. More equal position of women (wives) and men (husbands). Working mothers make significant share of total employment in Yugoslavia.

6. Housework and house duties are usually shared between members of family.

7. Women gained the right to decide (together with their mates) on having children (although abortion is still the prevailing method of birth control in Yugoslavia).

8. Weakening of patriarchal relations in families, which in principle means more relaxed and friendly atmosphere in a family, and consequently more stable family. Such a family allows its members to grow into mature, reliable persons, able to bear responsibilities.

9. In principle, movement from an extended to a nuclear family significantly contributed to a more relaxed family atmosphere thanks to the fact that some very common causes for family tensions (such as relations between daughter/son and parents in law, as well as traditional dominance of the father or the eldest

male member of a family) do not exist in a nuclear family.

10. Economic independence of family members, etc.

2.1. What we have lost: dark side of the coin

1. In order to maintain the level of living standard or to improve it, parents work harder and longer. That means that they have less and less time to spend with their children and that children are neglected, or that nurseries, kindergartens and schools take care of them¹⁵.

2. Usually parents (especially mothers) are torn between children and work. In addition, they are overburdened with housework which causes tensions in a family life¹⁶.

3. Grandparents usually live far from their grandchildren, so that grandchildren miss all the warmth, companionship, gentleness and

¹⁵ The demand for places in nurseries and kindergartens (these institutions are heavily subsidized) significantly exceeds their supply. One of the determinants of the increase in criminal behavior among youth is, for certain, the lack of attention and care (due to the lack of time) parents pay to their children. The secondary school drop ratio in 1990 got to more than 30 percent. Since chances to get a job are practically nonexistent, those young people spend most of their time in the streets being easy targets for gangs (the crime rate is increasing very fast), religious sects which are flourishing in the former Yugoslavia, they become alcohol or drug addicts, etc.

¹⁶ In Yugoslavia, paid maternity leave lasts between 6 and 12 months, depending on the republic. Also, there is a possibility for mothers to stay with their child until the child is 3 years old, but without any money allowance.

all other benefits they have when spending time with their grandparents (in Yugoslavia we say that grandparents have only love and joy for their grandchildren, while parents in addition have a duty to raise them into mature persons).

4. More and more old people live alone. As they grow older, there is more and more need to help them (through old-people houses, assistance and attendance allowances and help, etc.). Since these types of assistance usually go through the state institutions in the form of social expenditures (transfers), this means higher level of public expenditures, and consequently higher tax burden for taxpayers (younger generations). This is also the case with nurseries and kindergartens, since the state has to subsidize their current and capital costs.

4. More frequent divorces and child abuse during the process of divorce and afterwards.

5. Increase in the number of single-parent families, which could be the sign that we are losing even the nuclear family. It sounds almost like a cliché to say that children need both mother and father care (of course, under normal circumstances), as well as connections with their grandparents and other relatives. Our past, our tradition, our belonging to the long line of our ancestors, are also a part of our future.

6. Higher social cost, i.e. the need for social transfers both in kind and in cash is continuously increasing.

3. Economic crisis and Yugoslav family

The period of economic development in Yugoslavia ended in 1979 and a deep political and economic crisis began. Yugoslav family which in the 3 and a half decade period adjusted itself to the process of economic development, to a certain set of social values, and to the "rules of the game", faced a new challenges: decline in the living standard, rising poverty, political and ethnic tensions, uncertainty, lack of perspectives, dim future.

In the period from 1978 to 1991 the social product in Yugoslavia stagnated or declined causing real decrease in all the sources of households' income, which, consequently, led to the increase in poverty, i.e. in the number of people unable to satisfy their minimum needs. This increase was especially characteristic for the second half of the period when the absolute number of the destitute rose from 2.7 million in 1983 to 5.3 million in 1989, while the poverty ratio almost doubled: it increased from 12.5 percent in 1983 to 23.6 in 1989. As for the different socioeconomic categories of population, the poverty problem was the most acute between agricultural population where 41.6 percent of population was unable to cover for its basic needs. When mixed population is concerned (as mixed in Yugoslavia are classified those households whose income sources include both farming and permanent employment, either in social sector or self employment), its poverty ratio in 1989 was 23.4 percent. The lowest poverty ratio was recorded among urban population - 20.7 percent (in 1978

this ratio was 8.6 percent).

The socioeconomic structure of poverty in Yugoslavia in 1991 and 1978 (figures in parentheses referred to 1978) was as follows: the share of agricultural population in the total poverty was 16.9 percent (42.3), mixed 33.9 (33.2) and urban 49.7 percent (24.4). These percentages show that poverty problem in Yugoslavia is becoming a predominantly urban phenomenon. But the fact that rural population (pure agricultural and mixed population counted together) in 1989 stood for 1/2 of the total poverty could help explaining why there were no particularly strong social tensions in Yugoslavia, in spite of the fact that almost 1/4 of the Yugoslav population lived in poverty. Namely, the possession of a rural estate gives the poor at least an opportunity to produce more food for the household itself (to put it more roughly, it gives an opportunity to survive), but this however cannot obviate the fact that the high and increasing share of consumption in kind in the structure of household's revenue sources indicates the declining level of development.

Factors which mostly influenced the increase in poverty in Yugoslavia were: real decline in wages, pensions and income from a rural estate (which are principle sources of household's revenues in Yugoslavia), as well as increasing unemployment. In the period between 1979 and 1990 the real average wage in Yugoslavia decreased by 30 percent. The same happened to the average pension, while the real net monetary income from rural estate declined by

25 percent. At the same time, the absolute number of the unemployed increased at 4.6 percent average annual rate, so that in 1989 it was 63 percent higher than in 1978 (the share of the unemployed in active population rose from 5.2 to 7.8 percent). Main characteristics of unemployment in Yugoslavia between 1978 and 1989 were: (a) more than a half of the unemployed were young (18-24 years old) and their share in total unemployment in the mentioned period rose. Since the unemployed aged between 25 and 39 represented about 1/3 of the total unemployment, that meant that more than 90 percent of those looking for a job were under 40 years of age; (b) the first time labor market entrants accounted for 80 percent of the total number of the unemployed; (c) the waiting period got longer as there was an increase in the share of those who looked for a job at least for three years (from 17.2 percent in 1978 to 34.4 percent in 1989); and (d) the unemployed with no qualifications still represented a significant number of the unemployed - 41.3 percent in 1989).

The absence of possibilities for employment of predominantly young qualified labor force in Yugoslavia means the absence of possibilities for improvement of a family's economic status through an increase in the average number of the employed members of family, i.e. the unemployed are still a financial burden to their parents. In Yugoslavia parents support their children as long as they are not financially independent (households headed by a person who was 60 or more years of age and composed of three or more members made in 1990 16 percent of the total number of

households. Their income per capita was 20 percent lower than the average household income per capita). Unemployment also prevents formation of new young families.

During these years the erosion of the social security system also started. The quality of health care services, educational institutions, and child care and other social welfare institutions rapidly declined. Also, the real decline in the benefits' ratios (benefit per beneficiary level) of social transfers in cash was recorded.

It is clear that families have tried to defend themselves from the crisis in every possible way. But they had to fight alone, since there were no official social policy measures to help them win that battle. The consequences of this long lasting crisis on the stability of families in Yugoslavia are not yet known. All we know is that natural increase rate, as well as absolute number of marriages are declining, that more generations have to live together in inadequate, overcrowded apartments, that families now have to take care of their sick members, and the like. But more thorough analysis requires data which are not available at the moment (1991 Population Census data).

4. The disintegration of Yugoslavia and ethnic war

In 1991 the Yugoslav economic and political crisis reached its final stage. The whole political and economic system broke, the

country disintegrated, and the ethnic war began.

No one knows how many people were killed in this war. More than two million people left their homes. Most of them do not have where to return, since their houses were destroyed. Many families are scattered.

Ethnically mixed couples and their children are in an extremely difficult situation. In 1981, there were more than half a million mixed marriages or 13.5 percent of the total number of marriages. Children from those marriages represented 12 percent of the total number of children in Yugoslavia. Shares of mixed marriages are above the average in Croatia (15.9 percent) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (15.8 percent), the two republics of the former Yugoslavia where fighting took place till now. Shares of children from mixed marriages are the highest right there in the areas where some of the most violent fighting and devastations happened. For example, in Vukovar, which was completely destroyed, 34 percent of all children was from mixed marriages (mostly between Serbs and Croats). This basically means that, in this war, relatives (even children from the same parents) are fighting against each other. There are signs that many of these marriages are falling apart, since people now belong to different war tribes, not to each other. Socially, it is no more desirable to live in a mixed marriage. But the question is: what will happen to those families and their children?

In order to avoid mobilization, i.e. to escape involvement in this war, many young men left the country¹⁷. In all the republics they are officially considered as deserters ("traitors", "cowards"), and are not allowed to return without being sentenced for desertion.

The level of political clashes is very high, even within families. The politics in the Balkans are often mixed with emotions and passions, so that, due to political disagreement, long lasting friendships are easily broken, and relations in families get very tense. This is especially the case in Serbia where there is a deep political rift between the old and younger generation. The old are more conservative, they still believe that the socialism was a good system (as a lot of them greatly benefited from it), while young people are strongly market reform oriented. They do not want to belong to a tribe, they despise communist ideology, they want peace, jobs, democracy and freedom¹⁸.

¹⁷In the case of Serbia it is estimated that about 200 thousand young men left Serbia. Facing a total war and a life without hope, many families, especially of highly educated people, are leaving even the republics which are not currently in war. Some are sending their children away. Consequently, family and friend circle of many people and families dramatically changed.

¹⁸During the patriarchal times till the beginning of this century, between Serbs and Montenegrins there was a custom called "lapot". The eldest son was given the right to kill his old father (in order to use his turn and be the head of the family): he would put an unleavened bread on his father's head and then beat him to death by a stone through the bread, in front of all the

The economic situation in all the former Yugoslav republics (except Slovenia) is rapidly deteriorating. In Serbia, for example, the production is fast decreasing; monthly inflation rate exceeds 100 percent; people are facing massive lay-offs; the average wage in June 1992 was 47 USA \$ (80 percent lower than in June 1991); the average pension was 30 \$; it is estimated that at least 40 percent of population is not able to satisfy their basic needs; there are no drugs and medical materials, no food in hospitals, so that patients stay untreated; etc. The situation is alarming.

5. What should be done to strengthen a family and its stability and empower it as a basic social institution

The answer to this question is very difficult, as well as very complex one. That task for the former republics of Yugoslavia is even more difficult than for other countries, since the people of different nationalities have to learn to live together again (in all the republics there are citizens who belong to other Yugoslav nationalities). This will bring the peace and normal living conditions for everyone. Therefore, when the former Yugoslav republics are concerned, peace and political solution to all the problems are basic preconditions for normal family life.

inhabitants of the village. The custom is dead, but after the last elections in Serbia in which the old over voted the young and middle generation, the following joke came about: "Next time you go to vote, make sure you have safely locked your grandfather and father in a closet".

Economic empowerment of a family is the second important task. It is estimated that economic recovery of the former Yugoslav republics would, under normal conditions, take decades. How to help families when resources are so sparse? Even without a war the process of transition from socialism towards modern society based on market and democratic institutions is very painful and it affects everyone. The family is no exception. The old "world of security and stability" has gone, so the question is how to reach another at the lowest possible cost. There are some signs that in the former republics of Yugoslavia the family will be left to adjust itself to the changing world. To avoid it, they need all the positive experience from other countries.

Finally, education for family life is also very important part of our struggle to save and empower family. We are educated to become engineers or teachers, but no one educates us to become parents and to live in a family. We should also learn to communicate with our relatives and to appreciate the family life more. We have to find ways to stimulate members of extended families not to live together in the same house, but to live close enough to enjoy each other's company and to benefit from it¹⁹.

¹⁹ The long lasting crisis in Yugoslavia (13 years) showed that going through hard times is much easier for extended than for nuclear families.

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ABSTRACT

In the focus of the paper is the family in the former Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia represents a very interesting case since in the last fifty years of its history Yugoslav society was exposed to several drastic events and influences: The Second World War (which in Yugoslavia was also a civil war), socialist revolution, communist regime, relatively fast economic development, deep economic and political crisis, and, finally, the decay of the socialist system and disintegration of the country ending up in a war - this time ethnic. All those events and facts significantly influenced individuals, but families were nonetheless affected.

After the introduction, changes (gains and losses) in forms and patterns of family life due to the economic development which happened in Yugoslavia after the Second World War (from 1945 to 1978) are summarized and briefly discussed. Then, changes in the social and economic situation of Yugoslav households in the period between 1979 and 1991 (the period of deep economic and political crisis) are more attentively explained. Finally, some proposals for family empowerment policy (political preconditions, economic empowerment of a family and education for family life), are made.