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# Historiography of the Countries of Eastern Europe: Yugoslavia

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IVO BANAC

IN MAY 1979, ONE YEAR BEFORE TITO'S DEATH, the specialists on the history of Yugoslav unification gathered at one of those ritualistic congresses that Communist neo-traditionalism churned up with typical mastodonic grace. They gathered at Ilok, a sleepy Croatian town on the Danube, downstream from Vukovar, within sight of the Franciscan church in which St. John of Capistrano was laid to rest in 1456. But, unlike the swallows that mark the return of spring to the California mission named after the same warrior-saint, the historians at Ilok marked the points of appui for the lines of historiographic combat. To be sure, the four days at Ilok gave ample space to the usual drones of *faktografska istoriografija*, the tiresome and unimaginative unfoldings on the agreeable minutiae of Yugoslav unity. Still, this congress was unlike all previous gatherings of its kind. For behind the façade of stock phrases about "bourgeois historiography," "liberal integralist ideology," and "strategic imperialist aims and interests of big financial capital," one could hear entirely new tones and interpretations that went contrary to the celebratory intentions of the meeting. Instead of the solemn rite on the sixtieth anniversary of Yugoslavia, the proceedings were marred by several speakers, notably Momčilo Zečević, a Belgrade historian and specialist in Slovenian history, who took on several sacred cows.

In a report that one participant characterized as "shock therapy," Zečević asserted first that there existed a one-sided ideology and policy of treating the Yugoslav unification and the ideas that charted its course as if the "Yugoslav idea [was] an ancient and unilinear aspiration, created before the formation of nations, as a process that was coordinated in its motives and interests, and constantly on the rise"; second, that the official historiography overstated the importance of the supposed unitary trends, such as the nineteenth-century Illyrianist movement in Croatia; third, that there have been few systematic analyses of the "Serb national question, as a historical, state-juridical, and national interest of the Serb people"; fourth, that there existed (and presumably still exist) real national interests of each specific national community in Yugoslavia that may not always be reconcilable, precluding the possibility of reducing the Serb interests to that of the "national interests of the Serb bourgeoisie"; fifth, that historiography ignored the religious question—"a factor of first order in our area, including in the struggle for the establishment of Yugoslavia," which was inflamed by the three "leading churches [*sic*], Catholic, Orthodox, and Islamic," notably by the anti-Yugoslav

Vatican; sixth, that, due to “political and pedagogical motives,” historiography “remained obstinately silent about the fratricidal attacks among the Yugoslav peoples in the course of the First World War”; and last, in general, that the “reasons for mutual distrust and conflict among the participants in the unification of Yugoslavia . . . were complex and deep and could not be solved in an offhand manner, with various declarations, resolutions, and similar political and juridical acts.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1979, Yugoslav historiography, or, more exactly, its dominant institutional part, was still bound by the ideology of the Titoist party-state. Hence, seen retrospectively, Zečević’s paper was the beginning of an erosion of the Titoist interpretation of South Slavic history. It is a curiosity of the Yugoslav Communist regime that it failed to codify its thinking on a series of historical questions that had been controversial since the beginning of the Yugoslav state (1918). Nevertheless, the pragmatic consensus of Communist historical interpretation was summed up in Tito’s report to the Fifth Congress of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) in 1948. Tito assumed that the unification was innately good: “The unification of the South Slavs was needed and had to be accomplished. This was the idea of the most progressive people in the lands that were called South Slavic.” But he also recognized that the new state was burdened with inevitable conflicts from the very beginning, because of Great Serbian hegemony under the monarchy of the Karadjordjevićs and “bourgeois power.” He singled out Montenegro and Croatia as the two South Slavic lands in which the unification was resisted by the populace and thereafter imposed by the Serbian and Entente (mainly French) troops. He also implicated the non-Serbian bourgeoisie in the success of the Great Serbian project, because it feared the “revolutionary movement of the masses” more than Serbian hegemony.<sup>2</sup>

As for the nature of the interwar regime, Tito described it as the “dictatorship of the ruling Yugoslav bourgeoisie, headed by the king,” which put on a democratic mask until 1929, when “King Aleksandar was obliged to throw off that mask, trample the constitution and . . . openly proclaim a monarcho-fascist dictatorship.”<sup>3</sup> After the assassination of Aleksandar in 1934, the successive regimes, notably those of prime ministers Milan Stojadinović and Dragiša Cvetković (1935–1941), did not mitigate the severity of the dictatorship (“this was not the democratization of the country, but its fascisization under the influence of Italian and German fascism”). The Cvetković-Maček agreement of 1939, which sought to “solve” the Croatian question, was “in one sense, a division of power between the Serbian and Croatian bourgeoisie.”<sup>4</sup> Tito was particularly harsh with Vladko Maček, the leader of the Croat Peasant Party (HSS), for his anticommunism and leniency with the Croat pro-fascist Ustašas. As for the April war of 1941, when Yugoslavia was attacked and quickly occupied by the Axis powers, Tito held that “as is well known, the Yugoslav army capitulated, owing to the treachery and

<sup>1</sup> Momčilo Zečević, “Nekoliko pitanja istoriografiji o jugoslovenskom ujedinjenju,” *Stvaranje jugoslovenske države 1918*, Nikola B. Popović, ed. (Belgrade, 1983), 439–41, 446–48.

<sup>2</sup> Josip Broz Tito, “Politički izvještaj,” *Peti kongres Komunističke partije Jugoslavije: Izveštaji i referati* (Belgrade, 1948), 24–26.

<sup>3</sup> Tito, “Politički izvještaj,” 29.

<sup>4</sup> Tito, “Politički izvještaj,” 50, 53.

cowardice of the generals, after twelve days of weak resistance.”<sup>5</sup> It goes without saying that his version of wartime history was devoid of any sympathy for Draža Mihailović, the leader of the predominantly Serbian Chetniks, who, according to Tito, represented “the last remnant of armed power of the old, rotten, bourgeois order, [which] in no case wanted to struggle against the occupiers but, at all costs, wanted to safeguard the old bourgeois social order under the occupation.”<sup>6</sup> As for the Communists, “without the leading role of the KPJ [Communist Party of Yugoslavia], we would today have no new Yugoslavia . . . nor can one imagine the realization of brotherhood and unity of our peoples.”<sup>7</sup>

SINCE 1948, THIS VERSION OF YUGOSLAVIA’S TWENTIETH-CENTURY HISTORY was maintained in institutional historiography without regard to Communist party membership. The Yugoslav historical establishment, represented by a generation of historians born before 1918, such as Vaso Čubrilović, Dragoslav Janković, and Jorjo Tadić in Serbia; Vaso Bogdanov, Ferdo Čulinović, and Jaroslav Šidak in Croatia; Bogo Grafenauer and Fran Zwitter in Slovenia; and Anto Babić and Branislav Djurdjev in Bosnia-Herzegovina, was preoccupied, with exceptions, with the pre-1918 period. Although they occasionally disagreed, their disagreements were not subversive of the Titoist historical interpretation, which was further serviced by a somewhat younger establishment of historians specializing in the history of the KPJ (Pero Damjanović, Jovan Marjanović, Pero Morača, and Vlado Strugar). Both establishments, after accounting for disparities in age and interest, generally cohered in a series of joint projects, beginning with bibliographic guides on historical publications (published for the world congresses of historians in 1955, 1965, and 1975), two volumes of the “History of the Peoples of Yugoslavia” (1953, 1959), and in various encyclopedia projects, notably the two editions of the “Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia” (1955–1971, 1980–1991).

From the end of the 1960s, however, it became increasingly clear that the unity of Yugoslav historiography was dependent on regime unity. The demise of Yugoslavia in the 1990s cannot be traced to a single factor, nor was it only an aspect of regime fragmentation. Nevertheless, the internal troubles inside the Titoist establishment—the emergence, in the 1960s, of a reformist bloc with a strong base in the northwestern republics and the associated correlation between systemic reform and administrative decentralization (genuine federalism)—had immediate repercussions in historiography. The publication of the third volume of the “History of the Peoples of Yugoslavia,” which was to deal with the critical period of nineteenth and twentieth-century national integration and state-building, kept being postponed and never came to pass. There were growing polemics over controversial aspects of twentieth-century history. In 1963, General Velimir Terzić brought out his monograph *Jugoslavija u aprilskom ratu 1941* (Yugoslavia in the April War of 1941) in which he attributed Yugoslavia’s swift fall to the treason of Croat leaders, notably Maček, who supposedly “after 1930 . . .

<sup>5</sup> Tito, “Politički izvještaj,” 63–65.

<sup>6</sup> Tito, “Politički izvještaj,” 94.

<sup>7</sup> Tito, “Politički izvještaj,” 128–29.

sought the help of the Axis powers and worked on—and planned beforehand—the destruction of Yugoslavia. In fact, [this leadership] for the most part chose treason, which was clearly manifested in the April war.”<sup>8</sup> At the Eighth Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (SKJ), held in Belgrade in December 1964, Tito himself expressed an oblique criticism of “nationalist manifestations in historiography,” by denouncing “instances of indirect claims that aver some kind of primacy of one national history over the others.”<sup>9</sup>

Tito’s authority concealed the cleavages in what was still the single center of power. Ever the master of political balance, Tito expected historians to bestow, without favor, the proper measure of praise and censure on each national community. But he himself started providing increasingly different measures in historical scorekeeping. In 1966, Tito forced the leading Serbian Communist, Aleksandar Ranković, out of the SKJ leadership, signaling, among other things, greater leeway for the critics of Serbia’s role in Yugoslav history—but only up to a point. In short, he wanted to take centralism, with its political locus in Serbia, a few notches lower in general regard without stirring up a great deal of fuss.<sup>10</sup> By January 1970, the Croat Communists took the struggle against centralism one step further. In repudiating Yugoslavist unitarism, a tendency favoring the amalgamation of the Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, and other South Slavs into a supranational Yugoslav nation, they stated that no form of nationalism was attractive or without danger for Yugoslavia and its individual peoples, warning that “unitarism is in fact only a form of nationalism of the stronger nation in the variant of great state chauvinism.”<sup>11</sup> The pace of confrontation with centralism and unitarism, especially in its Serbian version, was at issue. Hence the nervous and inconclusive nature of historical polemics in the early 1970s.

Opposition to centralism and unitarism came largely as an unexpected gift to Croatian historiography, which did not really take full advantage of the opportunity.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, establishment historians in Croatia were exposed to harsh

<sup>8</sup> Velimir Terzić, *Jugoslavija u aprilskom ratu 1941* (Titograd, 1963), 664, n. 1. This book provoked a storm of criticism in Croatia, prompting political condemnations in the party press. According to one critic, “One gets the impression that [Terzić] proceeded from an a priori assumption that the collapse of royal Yugoslavia and its army was not caused, first of all, by its regime, untenable relations among its nationalities, corruption and lack of preparedness on the part of state and military leadership, and the aggression of fascist powers within a specific international situation, but that the causes of collapse must be sought among the consequences of this order of things, mainly in one consequence—the behavior of individual peoples in the April war, above all in the Croatian developments and in the behavior of the Croat people as a whole.” Stjepan Šćetarić, “O političkim i vojnim uzrocima sloma Jugoslavije,” *Putovi revolucije*, 2, nos. 3–4 (1964): 498–99.

<sup>9</sup> Josip Broz Tito, “Uloga Saveza komunista u daljnjoj izgradnji socijalističkih društvenih odnosa i aktualni problemi u međunarodnom radničkom pokretu i borbi za mir i socijalizam u svijetu,” in *Osmi kongres SKJ* (Belgrade, 1964), 35.

<sup>10</sup> In his concluding remarks at the plenum that censured Ranković (July 1966), Tito clearly had Serbia in mind as the “center of nationalist deviations that have manifested themselves even in the ranks of Communists,” but then he quickly added, “Let’s not now have only Belgrade in mind. Belgrade is the city of all South Slavs. There are a great number of Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, Bosnians, and Montenegrins in Belgrade. That is a Yugoslav city, and all of us are responsible for what happens in it.” Cited in *Četvrti plenum Centralnog komiteta Saveza komunista Jugoslavije* (Belgrade, 1966), 97.

<sup>11</sup> Savka Dabčević-Kučar, “Bratstvo i jedinstvo na elementima onoga što nas spaja u samoupravnom socijalizmu,” *X sjednica Centralnog komiteta Saveza komunista Hrvatske* (Zagreb, 1970), 6–7.

<sup>12</sup> Notable exceptions were the works of Franjo Tuđman, currently the president of Croatia, and Trpimir Macan, a historian of broad synthetic interests and a uniquely poignant reviewer of historical

censure by nonacademic practitioners such as Zvonimir Kulundžić, who berated their timidity and lack of patriotism.<sup>13</sup> But where the historians were still reluctant, other intellectuals ventured forth. The reading public was elated by the poet Vlado Gotovac's stinging attacks on Belgrade scholars Miroslav Pantić and Jorjo Tadić, who invested considerable energy in denying or ignoring the Croat character of Dubrovnik's prestigious literary and historical heritage. Playing on Tadić's textual scholarship, Gotovac charged that a "merchant's invoice is more important to [Tadić] in determining the national character of [Dubrovnik] than the city's whole spiritual tradition."<sup>14</sup> Tadić's posthumously published defense of the unitarist character of Dubrovnik went beyond the scope of his theme to affirm the traditional unitarist view that religion was the facile—and erroneous—dividing line between the Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats. In an allusion to the newly proclaimed policy of viewing Bosnian Muslims as a nation, he offered his opinion that "we are endeavoring to proclaim one of our religious communities as a nation, which is a unique case in present-day Europe."<sup>15</sup>

The tense early 1970s can only be understood as a conflict over the future of Yugoslavia. The centralist and unitarist bloc held that the distinctions between the nationalities were being blurred and that Yugoslavia could be homogenized on the traditions—real or invented—of forceful Yugoslavism. In practice, this meant the extirpation of non-Serb nationalisms, always interpreted as separatist and potentially fascistic, and the quiet absolution of Serbian history and political practice from the sin of supremacy. The remission of the supremacist offense was permitted precisely because "Great Serbian hegemony," willingly or unwillingly, regardless of its historical record, became an auxiliary to Yugoslav national amalgamation. Hence, when Tadić questioned his critics' unfavorable view of "insatiable centralist circles of Great Serbian monarchy," he credited the latter with the adoption of Yugoslavism and linked his critics with the anti-Yugoslav and fascistic Ustašas.<sup>16</sup>

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literature, but neither belonged to the academic establishment. For an insight into the concerns and criticisms of leading Croat historians in the early 1970s, see Mirjana Gross, "Hrvatska historiografija na prekretnici?" *Kritika*, no. 14 (September–October 1970): 642–54. The article is mainly concerned with the lack of institutional support for and adequate funding of Croatian historians.

<sup>13</sup> Kulundžić went for the jugular in stating that the misfortune of Croatian historiography lay in its domination "by men who served the previous regimes quite subserviently and who, for their own personal reasons, out of their guilt complex, transported their own sins onto the whole nation, thereby developing what we usually refer to as the *guilt complex* of this whole people." Zvonimir Kulundžić, *Tragedija hrvatske historiografije: O falsifikatorima, birokratima, negatorima, itd . . . itd . . . hrvatske povijesti*, 2d edn. (Zagreb, 1970), 7–8. Arguing that the Ustaša complex—a sense of guilt for the anti-Serb crimes of the Ustašas—was self-imposed, Kulundžić stated that the source of the problem rested with "us intellectuals who did not, sufficiently persistently and systematically, always and at every opportunity, place the Ustaša symbol of *U with a bomb* alongside the Chetnik symbol of *skull and bones*, Ustaša daggers and clubs alongside Chetnik curved knives and saws, [Ante] Pavelić alongside [Milan] Nedić and [Kosta] Pećanac . . . Just as only a small, insignificantly small portion of Serbs can be called by the extremely odious name of *Chetnik*, so, too, among the Croats, there was only a handful of bloodthirsty madmen in whom the beast was awakened and whom we can christen with the terrible name *Ustaša*"; Kulundžić, *Tragedija hrvatske historiografije*, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Vlado Gotovac, "Autsajderski fragmenti: Svitak treći," *Kritika*, no. 8 (September–October 1969): 557.

<sup>15</sup> Jorjo Tadić, "Sablasti kruže Jugoslavijom," *Istorijski časopis*, 18 (1971): 49.

<sup>16</sup> Tadić, "Sablasti kruže Jugoslavijom," 50.

The decentralist bloc proceeded from the demonstrable fact that amalgamation did not take place and concluded that this was not a setback but a benefit of Yugoslav unity. The decentralists stood by the historically evolving and separate national identities of each of the South Slavic nations, starting with the clearly distinct Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes but including the Macedonians and Montenegrins, whom the Yugoslav Communists recognized as distinct Yugoslav nations in the 1930s and thereafter treated accordingly. This roster of "nations" was completed in 1967 with Bosnian Muslims. In addition, a number of non-Slavic "nationalities," notably the Albanians of Kosovo and the Hungarians of Vojvodina, were recognized as unassimilable components of the multinational Yugoslav state and therefore entitled to every protection of identity, language, and culture, including contacts with their conationals in neighboring states (Albania, Hungary). The decentralist logic was that Yugoslavia would better cohere, or would at least be a less repressive place, if the threat of assimilation to any constituent nation, or for that matter to the supranational Yugoslav community, could be permanently removed. Hence when Gotovac attacked various unitarists, he did not fail to point out that "those who see only a superfluous problem in the real equality of our nations and nationalities, those who see only socially destructive nationalism in every national program, those who see only an insignificant remnant of history in every sign of national identity, no matter what sort of revolutionary ideas they have in their heads, are really aiding dogmatists and conservatives, are really giving a chance to their programs, to their terrorist voluntarism."<sup>17</sup> Obviously, the ideology of Yugoslav socialism itself became an instrument in the contention between the centralist/unitarist and decentralist/distinctivist camps.

The contention was soon tested in historiography but at an unseasonable hour. In December 1971, at the Twenty-First Session of the SKJ Central Committee, Tito disturbed the political equilibrium by striking at the League of Communists of Croatia. He accused its leaders, Savka Dabčević-Kučar and Miko Tripalo, previously his closest collaborators in the struggle against centralism, as being soft on Croat nationalism—of stressing the sovereignty of Croatia at the expense of Yugoslavia's collective sovereignty and state unity, moreover, to the detriment of socialist statehood, defined as a "community of working people," not as a national state.<sup>18</sup> This seemingly abrupt change in course inaugurated a nasty campaign against Croat nationalism, attended by arrests, mass firings and expulsions from the party, denunciations, and censorship. The brief synthesis *Povijest hrvatskog naroda* (History of the Croat People), by Trpimir Macan, whose outside reviewer was Franjo Tudjman, was withdrawn from the market and destroyed.<sup>19</sup> In a

<sup>17</sup> Gotovac, "Autsajderski fragmenti," 559.

<sup>18</sup> Josip Broz Tito, *Govori druga Tita* (Zagreb, 1971), 8.

<sup>19</sup> The contents of this handy book were hardly controversial. In fact, the author's balanced position was evident in all sensitive questions that mattered to the authorities. The book's offense had more to do with the known political liabilities of author and reviewer than with its biases. To be sure, there was also the sin of omission. The whole postwar section consists of the following three sentences: "In a state community with the other nations and nationalities of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Croat people live and prosper in the Socialist Republic of Croatia. [This republic] is a result of the joint struggle of Croats and Serbs, and of all South Slavic nations, in the

separate development, Tudjman was arrested and sentenced to two years in prison on charges of belonging to a “counterrevolutionary nationalist group.”<sup>20</sup> It was in this context that Vladimir Dedijer (1914–1990), Tito’s biographer, sometime dissident, and gadfly, announced the publication of *Istorija Jugoslavije* (History of Yugoslavia), stating that “there were some objections to the fact that [the book] will not be called the ‘History of the Peoples of Yugoslavia.’ It is good that the Twenty-First Session of the SKJ [Central Committee] took place. Had it been otherwise, the ‘History of Yugoslavia’ would have appeared, perhaps, only in an English edition.”<sup>21</sup>

Dedijer clearly meant to challenge the decentralist/distinctivist camp in its hour of trial. Excepting the authors of the book’s premodern sections, notable and highly respected Belgrade historians Ivan Božić and Sima Ćirković, the volume had a decidedly centralist bent. Writing on the twentieth century, Dedijer himself contributed one of his typically journalistic and quaint pieces that had much colorful detail but little analysis.<sup>22</sup> It was Milorad Ekmečić (b. 1928), Serb historian at the University of Sarajevo, who stepped forward with a series of interpretations on nineteenth-century developments that challenged the decentralists’ basic premises. In particular, he advanced the thesis that nationhood based on language was the only concept of nation-building that can be traced to progressive rationalist and romanticist premises. This permitted his defense of the Serbian language reformer and national ideologist Vuk Karadžić (1787–1864), who rejected the traditional identification between Serbdom and Orthodoxy in favor of an assimilationist notion that Serbs were defined by their language, meaning the štokavian dialect common to almost all Serbs, most Croats, and all Bosnian Muslims. Since Karadžić and his followers failed to assimilate Croats and Muslims through the construction of Serb “linguistic” nationhood, Ekmečić concluded that religion was to blame: “The basic democratic conception of a nation depended on the premise that [nations] should not be tied directly to religion but to a secular factor. Having attempted to realize this idea, the South Slavic awakeners succeeded only partially in their literary and cultural tasks, whereas the backward agrarian reality of the Balkans of the time prevented the success of their political tasks.”<sup>23</sup>

Ekmečić went on to claim that the “failure of this agrarian society to build a secular idea like language [*sic*] (the only possible democratic conception of society)

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National Liberation War [World War II]. It is the realization of the Croat people’s right to liberty, statehood, and independence.” Trpimir Macan, *Povijest hrvatskog naroda* (Zagreb, 1971), 228.

<sup>20</sup> Tudjman was charged with, among other things, calling for a reexamination of the historical circumstances that contributed to the never-ending Croat struggle for survival. On Tudjman’s role in historical controversies, see Željko Krušelj, “Franjo Tudjman—biografija,” in Tomislav Pušek, ed., *Franjo Tudjman* (Zagreb, 1991), 41–116.

<sup>21</sup> “Istorija,” *Politika* (March 30, 1972): 13.

<sup>22</sup> Dedijer did not fail to promote many questionable views, notably on the supposedly vast anti-Serbianism of the Slovene Catholic press in 1914, “genocide” against the Serbs of “Bosnia-Herzegovina and parts of Croatia” in World War I, exploitation of economically backward regions of interwar Yugoslavia by Slovenian and Croatian financial capital, “peasant spontaneity” in the activities of the HSS, and his own favorite themes of “spheres of influence” and “uniqueness of the Yugoslav revolution.” Ivan Božić, Sima Ćirković, Milorad Ekmečić, and Vladimir Dedijer, *Istorija Jugoslavije* (Belgrade, 1972), 383–84, 394–96, 424–26, 432–33, 529.

<sup>23</sup> Božić, et al., *Istorija Jugoslavije*, 236.



into the foundation of nationhood meant that the subsequent South Slavic history would be marked by this failure, thereby determining its whole purport.”<sup>24</sup> As a result, Ekmečić could not fail to see traces of religious—specifically, Catholic—obstructionism in all anti-unitarist movements, even when they were perfectly secular, as in the case of Ante Starčević’s Party of (Croat State) Right. By implication, the anti-unitarist policy of the SKJ also was seen as somehow connected to the Catholic church, the leap of faith that was made by Ekmečić and a significant portion of Serb opinion some twenty years later.

As it happened, the work of Dedijer and Ekmečić appeared in print in the fall of 1972, at approximately the same time as Tito’s attempt to reimpose discipline on the reluctant leadership of Serbian Communists, thereby reestablishing balance in Yugoslavia’s political system. Serbian Communist “liberals,” led by Marko Nikezić and Latinka Perović, were not the proponents of centralism. In fact, they were the first Serbian leaders in the history of Yugoslavia who retreated from centralist ambitions. Nevertheless, they also understood the struggle against centralism as the emancipation of Serbia from the tutelage of the federal center. This position won them some reprieve from Serbian nationalists but only heightened Tito’s suspicions. In the words of Latinka Perović, “whereas the other republics could always, with more or less reason, point to Serbia by attacking centralism in Tito’s presence, criticism of centralism from Serbia itself was understood as a direct challenge to Tito.”<sup>25</sup> After Tito removed the Croat leadership, the Serbians’ reluctance to jump on the bandwagon of the antinationalist campaign was seen as covert nationalism.<sup>26</sup> Nikezić and Perović resigned on October 21, 1972. Attacks on Serbian nationalism could then focus on Dedijer and Ekmečić.

THE “TURN” OF 1971–1972 REPRESENTED A RETREAT from democratization but not from Titoist federalism, which was defended and promoted by the increasingly repressive SKJ. The polemics against Dedijer and Ekmečić were therefore marked by repressive federalism, which was predicated on “sweeping up before one’s own threshold,” that is, on repudiating the “nationalism of one’s own nation.” For example, Serbian historian Branislav Gligorijević questioned Dedijer’s economic analysis, which he saw as devoid of “an accurate picture about the foundations of the Serbian bourgeoisie’s hegemony.” Djuro Stanisavljević, a Serb social historian from Croatia, questioned Dedijer’s figures on Serb war losses in Yugoslavia and Ustaša Croatia. (“Should the figures refer to the total number of Serbs killed during the war, then the figure of 200,000 is only insignificantly exaggerated. Should we believe the number of 600,000 Serbs killed in Croatia alone, and then take a look at the censuses of the last forty years, we would have

<sup>24</sup> Božić, *et al.*, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, 244.

<sup>25</sup> Latinka Perović, *Zatvaranje kruga: Ishod političkog rascjepa u SKJ 1971/1972* (Sarajevo, 1991), 195.

<sup>26</sup> The issue of Dubrovnik, more precisely, its depiction as a city of “štokavian-speaking Catholics” but not Croats, in the book *Srpski narod i njegov jezik* (The Serb People and Their Language, [Belgrade, 1971]) by the Serbian philologist Pavle Ivić, was used by the new leadership of Croatia to attack Serbian nationalism and, by implication, the Serbian leadership that took no repressive actions against it; Perović, *Zatvaranje kruga*, 398.

to question the motives of those who make such claims.") And Momčilo Zečević criticized Dedijer for "leaving an impression that animalistic Serbophobic attitudes existed in Slovenian bourgeois political circles."<sup>27</sup> But there was also a type of Marxist anti-hegemonism among the critics of the "History of Yugoslavia," for example, when the Bosnian Muslim historian Avdo Sućeska complained about the "insufficiently accented issues of class" in the book and then proceeded to note that this tendency was particularly damaging to the history of Bosnian Muslims, "who are barely noticeable in this book."<sup>28</sup>

Although swipes at Serbian biases were permitted if couched in Marxist rhetoric, this accommodation was less likely in "postnationalist" Croatia. To be sure, the establishment Croat historians strongly criticized Ekmečić and Dedijer. Mirjana Gross, in particular, made short work of Ekmečić's double standard. ("[Ekmečić] believes that the ideology of the Party of Right had many elements similar to the great nationalist movements of the [twentieth] century; first of all because of [its belief in] the 'geopolitical basis of nations.' I wonder why this bias should be ascribed only to the ideology that sought to gather the South Slavic population, which it considered Croat, into a Croatian state, and not to the ideology that sought to gather the South Slavic population, which it considered Serb, into a Serbian state?")<sup>29</sup> For all that, the freedom of debate was increasingly restricted as Croatia slipped into the period of "Croat Silence," which lasted until 1989. This was the age of unbridled sectarianism without genuine belief, administered by an alliance of dogmatists and opportunists. Stipe Šušar, Croatia's doctrinal watchdog, initiated periodic attacks on the humanistic intelligentsia. A typical example of these one-sided ideological combats was the assault in 1978 on Zvonimir Kulundžić's uneven biography of the peasantist author Slavko Kolar. Mounted by Goran Babić, a talented poet in Šušar's service, it included an ominous warning that exposés of unitarism in scholarship were subversive of the Yugoslav socialist system: "This is all about a struggle for or against socialism; and everything else is nothing but a smoke screen and noise whose aim is to conceal the basic course of this counterrevolutionary activity garbed in a literary, scholarly, and artistic robe, like a monk's habit. In order to disguise this, accusations of unitarism are being showered down upon us."<sup>30</sup>

In fact, the debate about the "History of Yugoslavia" was the last major historical debate in the oppressive atmosphere of late Titoism. The pursuit of politics through historiography wound down by the middle of the 1970s, at the time of Tito's last legislative effort. The constitution of 1974 was meant to establish repressive federalism as a political *perpetuum mobile*. Its basic feature was a system of unceasing rotation of and representation by the republican leaders, redefined to include, to the chagrin of Serbia's opinion makers, the leaders of Serbia's two autonomous provinces—Vojvodina and Kosovo. Analogous sub-systems operated in every area of public interest, including historiography; the

<sup>27</sup> "Istorija Jugoslavije," *Gledišta*, 14 (March 1973): 275, 290, 297.

<sup>28</sup> "Istorija Jugoslavije," 264.

<sup>29</sup> Mirjana Gross, "Ideja jugoslavenstva u XIX stoljeću u 'Istoriji Jugoslavije,'" *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 5 (1973), no. 2: 15.

<sup>30</sup> Goran Babić, *Možda uzaludno: Polemike* (Zagreb, 1983), 167.

congresses of historians kept rotating from republic to republic.<sup>31</sup> However, while the architects of revolving machines always attempt to free the motion of their constructions from the influence of every physical force, Tito's *perpetuum mobile* was meant to highlight the visible hand of the party. That was the system's structural weakness, as became evident with Tito's death in 1980.

The Serbian leadership, however reliably Titoist after 1972, grumbled against the constitution as early as July 1977. It seized on the passing of Tito as a signal to begin the unraveling of the federalist era. The opportunity for launching the debate on the constitutional order, primarily over the liabilities of Serbia's "parcelization" into three federal units, presented itself in the spring of 1981 with the commencement of demonstrations by Albanian students in Kosovo. Henceforth, the Serbian intelligentsia and political elite were on a campaign against Tito's constitution. Their calls for the diminution of Kosovo's autonomy could only be accomplished by exaggerating the Albanian menace and by reopening every historical underpinning of Tito's federalism. The sparring at the historians' congress in Ilok was the parent of this effort.

History's utility to Yugoslav politics was not a debatable premise in 1981. It is more difficult, however, to account for the speed with which the new political vacuum prompted an outpouring of revisionist works, almost exclusively in Serbia. Most of these works, at least initially, dissected the history of the system and its demiurge. Ironically, it was Dedijer, the "Partisan Michelet," as he was called in a poignant obituary, who first lifted the hand that had written Tito's official biography against his erstwhile master.<sup>32</sup> Dedijer's *Novi prilozi za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita* (New Contributions to the Biography of Josip Broz Tito; 1981) demythologized the late dictator and portrayed him as a lecher and schemer, dissembler and master of craftiness, bon vivant and tyrant, charismatic leader and pacesetter in "excessive retortion" (Dedijer's euphemism for the execution of "enemies").<sup>33</sup> Though maintaining the appearance of amity for his subject, Dedijer clearly delighted in breaking every taboo, from Tito's participation in the Austro-Hungarian units on the Serbian front in 1914 to the negotiations between his Partisan forces and the Germans in 1943, from the Comintern's policy toward Yugoslavia to the responsibility for the reckless endangerment of imprisoned Communist leaders in Croatia (the abortive Kerestinec escape of 1941). This ungraceful book, a cabbage head on a makeshift body, full of unrelated provocations, including Dedijer's obsession with "revolutionary suicides" and vituperative epithets directed against Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac, archbishop of Zagreb and metropolitan of Croatia, provoked a storm of protest. It was also widely read and set the course for an entire line of iconoclastic volumes by Serbian authors.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> The penultimate meeting was at the spa of Arandjelovac, in Serbia, in 1983. The last ever, ominously, at Kosovo's capital of Priština in 1987.

<sup>32</sup> Branislav Milošević, "Partizanski Mišle," *Vreme*, 1 (December 10, 1991): 27.

<sup>33</sup> Vladimir Dedijer, *Novi prilozi za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita*, vol. 2 (Rijeka, 1981), *passim*.

<sup>34</sup> The "federal" daily *Borba* (Struggle), the durable bastion of orthodox Titoists, organized a round table on Dedijer's book for January 6, 1982. Participants characterized the volume as "contributions to Dedijer's squaring of accounts with the revolution that he has deserted" (Julijana Vrčinac), "a common but profoundly calculated political pamphlet, imbued with profound antisocialism, anti-communism, and anti-Marxism, devised to glorify [Milovan] Djilas and his blackest liberalistic orientation" (Djuradj Stanisavljević), and "contributions against Josip Broz Tito, his deeds, and our

An admirer of Dedijer has claimed that *Novi prilozi* “definitively mark[ed] the end of illusions that our history can be written according to traditional foreign models, in which everything is subordinated to dry documents and conclusions of political forums . . . Our true history . . . for better or worse, is still exclusively oral.”<sup>35</sup> Small wonder that Dedijer’s overstated revisionism legitimated sensationalist debunking and diminished genuine scholarship.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the book that Gojko Nikoliš, veteran Communist and dissident, had touted as the “most sensational of all that have appeared in our epoch and on our soil” opened the door for the pretensions of more serious Serbian scholars, who were frequently also more politically sophisticated than Dedijer.<sup>37</sup> Whether they were party loyalists, like Branko Petranović or Momčilo Zečević, or dissidents bent on challenging the political monopoly of the SKJ, like Vojislav Koštunica and Kosta Čavoški, their parallel activities weakened the established interpretations of wartime and postwar developments and contributed to the growing sense of resentment among the Serbian public, frustrated with the party’s inability to “pacify” Kosovo, undo the constitution of 1974, and reconstruct a strong centralized administration favorable to Serb national interests.

Branko Petranović’s *Revolucija i kontrarevolucija u Jugoslaviji (1941–1945)* (Revolution and Counterrevolution in Yugoslavia, 1941–1945; 1983) was an early and relatively moderate contribution to the reinterpretation of the Yugoslav war along the lines of Serbian national communism. Petranović clearly had his blind spots (the Catholic church, Croat and other non-Serb nationalisms, liberal institutions), but he usually succeeded in keeping his feelings under control and certainly committed no major offenses against professional standards. His principal innovation was the ideological redefinition of the Chetnik movement. Even though Petranović made no effort to obscure the growing collaborationism of the

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revolution” (Joco Marjanović). In his discussion, Jovan Pavićević clearly recognized the complicated array of xenophobic and paranoid attitudes that were typical of “old cadres”: “I often asked myself after [reading] this book, perhaps even earlier, is the Western public, American and Western public generally, really interested in our National Liberation Struggle, since already in 1953 Dedijer started writing books for the West? What is this now? Does America really want to know how to make revolution, does it want an example? Or is something else at work here—the destabilization of socialist Yugoslavia? Is this not Dulles’s policy: do not attack communism from the outside, but from the inside?” Milovan Dželebdžić ended his discussion on an ominous note: “All of this should be borne in mind, lest we experience some new trauma, some new civil war, some new massacre.” Branko Jovanović, ed., *Razgovor o knjizi Vladimira Dedijera “Novi prilozi za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita”* (Belgrade, 1982), 14, 39, 43, 78, 84.

<sup>35</sup> Milomir Marić, “Komesar za ishranu radoznalih,” *Duga* (July 10, 1984): 43.

<sup>36</sup> Among the sensationalist works published in the wake of Dedijer’s *Novi prilozi*, the following were notable: Vjenceslav Cenčić, *Enigma Koprivnič*, 2 vols. (Belgrade, 1983); and Dragan Kljakić, *Dosije Hebrang* (Belgrade, 1983). Both stressed the dependence of Yugoslav Communists on the Comintern and raised suspicions about the continuity of nationalist “deviations” in the Communist Party of Croatia. Both also touched on the persecution of those Yugoslav Communists, the so-called Cominformists, who sided with Stalin and the Cominform resolution in the Soviet-Yugoslav split of 1948. Simultaneously, there appeared a series of novels and plays on the Goli Otok concentration camp, which the Yugoslav security police prepared for the incarceration of Cominformists. The most important of these works were Antonije Isaković, *Tren 2: Kazivanja Čeperku* (Belgrade, 1982); Slobodan Selenić, *Pismo/glava* (Belgrade, 1982); and Dušan Jovanović, *Karamazovi* (Belgrade, 1984). The publication of these highly charged fictional works put pressure on historians to “solve” the questions that the litterateurs posed.

<sup>37</sup> “Novi prilozi’ . . . od prigovora do osporavanja,” *Vjesnik* (March 10, 1982): 5.

Chetniks, he broke with the canons of Communist historiography by stating that the “most significant antifascist manifestation among the Serbian bourgeoisie was connected with the Chetnik organization of Dragoljub-Draža Mihailović.”<sup>38</sup> As antifascists, that is, a complex set of collaborators, the Chetniks thereby were associated with an anticommunist “counterrevolution” of a Western type.

This position, which was infinitely more favorable than that of mere “fascist hirelings,” could be further elaborated. Andrej Mitrović, a Serbian historian of more pronounced liberal orientation, seized on Petranović’s dualistic distinction between “revolution” (communism) and “counterrevolution” (everything else) to introduce a somewhat more nuanced triad of “liberalism, communism, and fascism.” In his words, “I want to stress this triad precisely because we have really only two phenomena—revolution and counterrevolution—in the title that Petranović offered us, whereas, at the time [of the war], the history of Europe developed under the aegis of three possibilities. Moreover, it must be understood that a war front did not exist between the world of socialism and capitalism but between the coalition of a socialist state [USSR] and liberal states, on one side, and the fascist states, on the other. This confrontation, as a general European model, is interesting in relation to [Petranović’s] thesis that the revolutionary front collided with the counterrevolutionary front on our soil. On international soil, we had three fronts, of which two had made a coalition against the third, that is, after all changes were accounted for, since the socialist state was in coalition with a fascist state at the beginning of the war.”<sup>39</sup>

Where was the “third front” of liberalism? To Mitrović, this was the continuity of the interwar Yugoslav state, ever in conflict with “Central European imperialism,” in which Serbia represented the most dependable ally of liberal Western Europe, meaning Britain and France. Petranović did not take this reinterpretation to its logical conclusion, although he insisted throughout the book that the “international-legal life of a temporarily defeated [Yugoslav] state was not extinguished” during the war.<sup>40</sup> Even though he penned extremely straightforward passages that left no doubt about the KPJ’s dependence on the Comintern’s “alien state policy garbed . . . in proletarian internationalism,”<sup>41</sup> he was not prepared to see the exiled royal government as a credible liberal force or to endow its Chetnik agency with the mantle of pluralism. To be sure, the collection of sources *Jugoslavija 1918/1984: Zbirka dokumenata* (Yugoslavia 1918–1984: Collection of Documents; 1985), which he edited together with Momčilo Zečević, was accused of downplaying Chetnik massacres,<sup>42</sup> but the expanded edition of his *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918–1988* (History of Yugoslavia, 1918–1988; 1988), whose printing was in part financed by the research and publications fund of the SKJ Central

<sup>38</sup> Branko Petranović, *Revolucija i kontrarevolucija u Jugoslaviji (1941–1945)*, 2 vols. (Belgrade, 1983), 1: 129.

<sup>39</sup> Andrej Mitrović, “Nedovršena slika,” *Politika* (October 15, 1983): 10.

<sup>40</sup> Petranović, *Revolucija i kontrarevolucija*, 1: 99.

<sup>41</sup> Petranović, *Revolucija i kontrarevolucija*, 2: 82.

<sup>42</sup> Anto Milušić, “U povodu najnovije zbirke dokumenata o Jugoslaviji (Branko Petranović i Momčilo Zečević, *Jugoslavija 1918–1984, IRO ‘Rad’, Beograd 1985*),” *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 18 (1986), no. 1: 111. For the authors’ responses, see Branko Petranović and Momčilo Zečević, “Odgovor na napis Anta Milušića ‘U povodu najnovije zbirke dokumenata o Jugoslaviji,’” *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 18 (1986), no. 3: 116–21.

Committee, contained a new and impassioned denunciation of Great Britain and America's "deception of the democratic world" by supporting the Chetniks until the summer and fall of 1942.<sup>43</sup> Petranović's preference was for a Serbian-led federal (and Communist) Yugoslavia, not for Serb dominance at any price.

If the number of books sold is any indicator, Petranović's audience was vast, but his social impact, sanitized as it was by official prizes and SKJ graces, was nevertheless limited. It was otherwise with the innocently titled monograph *Stranački pluralizam ili monizam: Društveni pokreti i politički sistem u Jugoslaviji 1944–1949* (Party Pluralism or Monism: Social Movements and the Political System in Yugoslavia, 1944–1949; 1983), which bore the cachet of the Belgrade Praxis group.<sup>44</sup> The book's authors, social scientists Vojislav Koštunica and Kosta Čavoški, turned the cheaply printed edition of a thousand copies into a political fire bomb. Their theme was the source of "tactical craftiness" applied by the KPJ to create an impression during the war that it was in favor of a multiparty political system, only to establish Communist political hegemony after the seizure of power. Individual chapters discussed the various methods that the Communists used to marginalize, silence, and eliminate alternative political organizations, as well as the issues at stake in the conflict between the Communists and the adherents of political pluralism. Not surprisingly, Koštunica and Čavoški found the sources of Yugoslav Communist practice in Bolshevik monism and insistence on the monopoly of power. The party polemicists quickly denounced the book as a "plaidoyer for a multiparty system" and an "extremely controversial and tendentious book without precedent in our postwar history."<sup>45</sup> Although the authors made no special reference to the nationality question, their favorable view of the predominantly Serbian Democratic Party of Milan Grol suggested a noncommunist Serbian model of pluralism.

THE OPPOSITIONAL THEMES IN SERBIAN SCHOLARSHIP roused the SKJ watchdogs in the other republics. But it was the Croat conservatives, still on guard against heterodox thinking in their own back yard, who were particularly alarmed by the new trends in Serbian publishing. Stipe Šuvar, Croatia's chief SKJ ideologist, summoned 165 historians and party activists to Zagreb in October 1983 for a

<sup>43</sup> Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918–1988*, 3 vols. (Belgrade, 1988), 2: 186.

<sup>44</sup> In January 1975, the parliament of Serbia passed a special act designed to exclude from active teaching eight professors and instructors at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Belgrade. These dissident Marxist philosophers and sociologists, associated through their publications and in the public mind with the Zagreb journal *Praxis*, were put "at disposal," which is to say that the authorities ultimately gave them research positions at a special university institution, the Center for Philosophy and Social Theory, publisher of the Koštunica-Čavoški book in 1983. Four of the eight (Zagorka Golubović, Dragoljub Mićunović, Nebojša Popov, and Svetozar Stojanović) were cited in the front matter of this book in the capacity of reviewers or editors.

<sup>45</sup> Pero Pletikosa, "Pledoaje za višestranački sistem," *Vjesnik* (September 20, 1983): 3; Mirko Arsić, "Tendenciozna 'rekonstrukcija,'" *Politika* (August 6, 1983): 12. In his attack on Koštunica and Čavoški, Arsić was especially insistent on the special role of the KPJ as a party "in the great historical sense." Since the authors were incapable of such obeisance, they were "incapable of comprehending the logos of Yugoslav socialist revolution." Under a barrage of partisan attacks, the authors were themselves obliged to plead that "it is malicious to claim that we are in favor of a multiparty system." Nataša Marković, "Kiselo groždje," *Danas* (September 27, 1983): 19.

two-day conference awkwardly titled "Historiography, Memoir-Publicistic, and Feuilleton Production in Light of Ideational Controversies." Serbian historians clearly did not wish to confer legitimacy to a meeting that was expected to lash out at Belgrade's ideological latitudinarianism. Of the 70 invitees who did *not* attend, 34 were from Belgrade and Novi Sad, including such notable historians as Sima Ćirković, Dragoslav Janković, Andrej Mitrović, Pero Morača, Čedo Popov, Branko Petranović, and Momčilo Zečević.<sup>46</sup> Šuvar set the tone for the conference by stating that the time had come for "us" to stop being defensive: "The League of Communists today, more than ever before, must show its ability and strength as the collective intellectual leadership of the working class, must organize the struggle of ideas over real issues and in the right way."<sup>47</sup> Following Šuvar's lead, alarms were sounded by most participants. Retrospectively, the warnings of Vojan Rus, who predicted "three or four Lebanons" in Yugoslavia should the proponents of a multiparty system have their way, seem exaggerated only in their chain of causality.<sup>48</sup> The preventive measures were accordingly misplaced.

Šuvar cautioned against the "harmful consequences of all suspicious intrigues in historiography . . . in the sphere of multinational relations." He noted the thesis that the "KPJ was a tool of the Comintern in weakening and wrecking [interwar] Yugoslavia, and that it even carried out an assigned mission of cutting up . . . the new Yugoslavia, especially by setting back and breaking up some of our nations."<sup>49</sup> He clearly aimed at national protectionism in Serbian historiography. As an object lesson in how to deal with nonconforming historians, his assistants soon whipped up two controlled witch hunts in Zagreb. In January 1984, Zagreb's Yugoslav Lexicographical Institution published the first volume of *Hrvatski biografski leksikon* (Croatian Biographical Lexicon). The biographies of 1,751 notables written by 270 authors aided by 40 editorial assistants, covering the surnames from A to Bi, contained, according to Ines Šaškor, examples of "insufficient Marxist critical evaluation of the contributions of individual personalities to national history."<sup>50</sup> In April 1984, Goran Babić wrote a convulsive article in which he cited several hundred clerics in the lexicon's published and projected list of subjects, charging that this "reactionary publication" revived an "enormous number of totally marginal people whose sole historical 'merit' was a monk's habit or some black garb, not to mention that there are criminals among them."<sup>51</sup> And, in June 1984, the ideological commission of Zagreb's League of Communists of Croatia (SKH) City Committee organized a discussion on the suspect publication.<sup>52</sup> Then, in December 1984, Croat hard-liners mounted a campaign against a newly published survey of Croatian film history, *Između publike i države: Povijest*

<sup>46</sup> Also missing were Mirjana Gross, Dragovan Šepić, and Jaroslav Šidak, three of the most prominent Croat historians, who were also invited to the conference.

<sup>47</sup> Stipe Šuvar, "Historija revolucije tiče se nas svih," in *Historija i suvremenost: Idejne kontroverze*, Ivan Perić, ed. (Zagreb, 1984), 9.

<sup>48</sup> Vojan Rus, "Između liberalističkih i dogmatskih revizija," in Perić, *Historija i suvremenost*, 131.

<sup>49</sup> Šuvar, "Historija revolucije tiče se nas svih," 14.

<sup>50</sup> Ines Šaškor, "I zločinci—znameniti Hrvati," *Nedjeljna Dalmacija* (August 25, 1985): 22.

<sup>51</sup> Goran Babić, "Voćna salata ili pomirenje svih Hrvata," *Oko* (April 26, 1984): 5, 8–9.

<sup>52</sup> Sanja Vrhovec, ed., *Aporije Hrvatskog biografskog leksikona* (Zagreb, 1984). Although most participants did not share Babić's view that the edition was an "expression of spiritual counterrevolution," critical and even denunciatory tones prevailed in the discussion.

*hrvatske kinematografije 1896–1980* (Between Public and State: A History of Croatian Cinematography, 1896–1980; 1984), by Ivo Škrabalo. The book was denounced as an anticommunist “pamphlet” in which “no sentence is accidental and almost all are tendentious.”<sup>53</sup>

The lessons in repression were not assimilated in Serbia. Unlike the Croat intellectuals, whose spirits were cowed, Serbian intellectuals, historians especially, whether Communists or noncommunists, became increasingly more daring in their publications. They were not intimidated by the drones of the historical establishment and their ideological warnings at the Eighth Congress of Historians of Yugoslavia (Arandjelovac, October 1983)<sup>54</sup> or by the antics of Šušteršič and Babić. Unfortunately, they were also increasingly more nationalistic. In 1983, Velimir Terzić brought out a new and expanded version of his book on the collapse of Yugoslavia in the April war of 1941 in which he repeated his old theses about Croat betrayal and thereby provoked bitter recriminations from Zagreb.<sup>55</sup> Desanka Pešić’s book on the Communist nationality policy from 1919 to 1935 was essentially a rehabilitation of Sima Marković (1888–1938), secretary of the KPJ’s Central Party Council in 1919, a leading Serbian Communist, and leader of the Right faction in the party disputes of the 1920s, whose position on the nationality question—notable for its opposition to alliances with the mass movements of non-Serb nationalities—was favorably reevaluated as a classic Leninist position. Pešić’s principal theme was the danger of using “national struggle as a tool of class struggle,” thereby permitting the dominance of national ideology” in Communist politics. This view implied that Serbian disinterest in Croat or Albanian national movements was good communism. Pešić made this even more explicit by denouncing the Communist “treatment of the Serb people [in the interwar period] as strictly *exploitative*” and by arguing that the Communists generally overlooked the relevance of the “Serb question,” that is, the integration of the Serbs within a single state.<sup>56</sup>

Rehabilitation of dethroned Serbian leaders of the interwar period was a further step in the revival of Serb national claims. Some journalists started promoting King Aleksandar, assassinated in Marseilles in October 1934 by Italian-backed Croat and Macedonian terrorists, as the “first victim of fascism in Europe.”<sup>57</sup> But it was historian Djordje Dj. Stanković’s biography of Nikola Pašić (1845–1926) that initiated the trend in scholarship. Pašić was the leader of the Serbian Radical Party, prime minister of Serbia and Yugoslavia, and chief architect of Serbian predominance in the unified Yugoslav state.<sup>58</sup> In his work, Stanković avoided the uncritical attitudes of pre-war Serbian historians who viewed Pašić’s efforts in the unification of Yugoslavia as selfless determination to

<sup>53</sup> Mira Boglić, “Povijest ili pamfleti,” *Vjesnik: Sedam dana* (December 12, 1984): 12–13; R. Arsenić, “To nije istorija,” *Politika* (March 8, 1985): 10.

<sup>54</sup> Ratko Peković, “Kako oživeti vreme,” *Duga* (November 5, 1983): 30–32.

<sup>55</sup> Velimir Terzić, *Slom Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1941*, 2 vols. (Belgrade, 1982–83). For a response from a leading Croat historian, see Ljubo Boban, “Izvod iz strogo povjerljive kombinitorike Velimira Terzića. A ponešto i o drugim kombinitorikama,” in Perić, *Historija i suvremenost*, 263–75.

<sup>56</sup> Desanka Pešić, *Jugoslovenski komunisti i nacionalno pitanje (1919–1935)* (Belgrade, 1983), 143–44, 283.

<sup>57</sup> Milomir Marić, “Lov na jednog kralja,” *Duga* (November 4, 1984): 30–32.

<sup>58</sup> Djordje Dj. Stanković, *Nikola Pašić i jugoslovensko pitanje*, 2 vols. (Belgrade, 1985).



liberate all the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes from foreign rule. And he took aim at postwar Marxist historians who blamed Pašić not only for opposing the democratic aspirations of the masses but (after having opted for Serbian hegemony instead of Yugoslav cooperation) also for wrecking all offers of agreement with the South Slavic bourgeoisie of the former Austro-Hungarian territories. Instead, he insisted that Pašić was solving the “Serb national question,” that is, the unification of all Serbs within a single state, which, according to Stanković, necessarily promoted the interests of the other South Slavs. This sort of “Yugoslavism,” defined essentially as a Serb interest, was at the heart of the nationality disputes of the 1980s and hence an accompanying factor in the political disputes.

The wave of Serbian historical revisionism, attended as it was by the appearance of revealing memoirs by various Communist leaders<sup>59</sup> and publications on Masons and other creators of “secret histories,”<sup>60</sup> could not by itself be a decisive threat to the stability of nationality relations as long as it was not an immediate instrument of political contention. All of that changed with the rise of Slobodan Milošević (b. 1941) to party leadership in Serbia, when the conclusions of political historiography became fully operational in Serbia’s confrontation with the autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina and indeed with the “constitution defenders” in the other republics and in the federal center. Among the curiosities of these intricate struggles was the fact that Milošević rose to power as an orthodox Titoist ready to use “administrative measures” against dissidents. This did not prevent the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU), increasingly a nationalist and anticommunist bastion, from lending its authority to Slobodan Milošević.

In May 1985, at the annual meeting of SANU, members decided to organize a commission that would be charged with coordinating a draft memorandum on the current situation in Yugoslavia. The commission included two historians—Radovan Samardžić and Vasilije Krestić. A draft of the document came into the possession of a Belgrade daily in September 1986. According to one version, orthodox Titoists in the federal center, perhaps connected with the conservative federalists outside Serbia, wanted an affair that would embarrass the Serbian leadership and demonstrate its laxity toward nationalism. “The Memorandum of SANU” was the perfect foil for the diminishing luster of Titoist communism. Its authors argued that the confederalist tendencies in the constitution of 1974—not any other systemic weaknesses—were the source of Yugoslavia’s growing difficulties. The root of the problem was the primacy of national over class interest that the KPJ inherited from Stalin’s Comintern:

<sup>59</sup> On September 18, 1987, at a session of the League of Communists of Serbia (SKS) Central Committee, General Nikola Ljubičić, Tito’s longtime minister of defense, denounced the flood of Serbian memoirs: “Here, you see, we have memoirs of Koča Popović, Milovan Djilas, Vojan Lukić, Mirko Marković, Mirko Perović, Milija Kovačević, Gustav Vlahov, Patriarch Dožić, Radivoje Jovanović, Ljubodrag Djurić, and I don’t know who else. What will it mean for Serbia when all of these memoirs are published, and what will the world think of us?” Cited in Slavoljub Djukić, *Kako se dogodio vodja: Borbe za vlast u Srbiji posle Josipa Broza* (Belgrade, 1992), 160.

<sup>60</sup> See especially Zoran D. Nenezić, *Masoni u Jugoslaviji (1764–1980): Pregled istorije slobodnog zidarstva u Jugoslaviji; Prilozi i gradnja* (Belgrade, 1984). Nenezić insinuated that Tito and Kardelj were Masons and that they belonged to the pro-federalist Masonic lodge with Juraj Krnjević and Juraj Šutej, leaders of the Croat Peasant Party; 417, 634, 646, 649, 665. For a polemic on this issue, see Letters to the Editor, *NIN* (October 7, 1984): 4–6, 8. Fascination with Masons was not exclusive to Serbia. For a Croat equivalent, see Ivan Mužić, *Masonstvo u Hrvata: Masoni i Jugoslavija* (Zagreb, 1983).

The strategy of the Comintern [in the interwar period] derived from an estimate that after the absence of proletarian revolution in Western Europe, the Communist parties of Eastern, Central, and Southern Europe must rely on national movements, even if they were explicitly antisocialist and founded on the idea of national as opposed to class unity. Stalin was active in demolishing all resistance to this strategy (for example, in the case of Sima Marković, one of the KPJ's founders). In this spirit, Sperans (Edvard Kardelj) formulated and developed his theory on the national question in his book *Development of the Slovene National Question* [1939], which mainly served as an ideational formula for the development of Yugoslavia toward a confederation of sovereign republics and provinces, a formula finally realized in the constitution of 1974. The two most developed republics [Slovenia and Croatia], which realized their national programs with the promulgation of this constitution, today stand as stubborn defenders of the existing system.<sup>61</sup>

The memorandum contained a series of charges about the economic and political discrimination that Serbia allegedly suffered under the Tito regime. Once again, the cause was found in the supposed “revanchist” policy that the Communists imposed on the Serbs, whom they treated as a nation of oppressors, centralists, and gendarmes. Moreover, the “economic subjugation of Serbia” was carried out by an alliance of Croat and Slovene Communists. Croatia and Slovenia “shared similar a historical fate, the same religion, and an aspiration toward the greatest possible independence. As the most developed republics, they also shared common economic interests, which were sufficient reasons for a lasting coalition in attempts to realize political domination. This coalition was deepened by the longstanding collaboration between Tito and Kardelj, the two most important political figures of postwar Yugoslavia, who enjoyed unquestioned authority in the centers of power.” The “anti-Serb coalition” promoted the virtual separation of Kosovo and Vojvodina from Serbia proper, the “genocide” against the Serbs of Kosovo, the disintegration of Serb culture along republic lines, and “Serbophobia.” The Serbs of Croatia were deprived of their institutions and exposed to assimilation: “Excepting the [wartime] period, never have the Serbs of Croatia been so imperiled as today. A solution to their national status is becoming a political question of the first order.” The memorandum concluded with a call for the revision of the constitution by making Kosovo and Vojvodina “real constituent parts of the Republic of Serbia,” by abolishing the confederalist elements of the constitution, and, failing that, by defining Serbia’s economic and national interests, presumably outside Yugoslavia.<sup>62</sup>

The novelty of the memorandum was its questioning of Yugoslavia as the optimal solution for the Serbs. Usually, the non-Serb national movements hurled accusations at Yugoslavia on account of various Serbian advantages in the common state. Now, the leading Serbian intellectual institution cast its own aspersions on Yugoslavia. The memorandum shocked and compromised the Communist leadership of Serbia. Although Slobodan Milošević left an impression that he “purposely did not wish to be clear” on the question of the memorandum, he gained considerably from its publication. According to one view, he was privately already in favor of the memorandum’s theses. He openly adopted them

<sup>61</sup> “Memorandum SANU,” *Duga* (June 1989): 26.

<sup>62</sup> “Memorandum SANU,” 36, 38–40, 42–43, 44, 46, 47.

“two years later as his programmatic orientation. As a result, this document later gained far greater significance than when it originally appeared.”<sup>63</sup> The historiography that rose in its shadow represented more than a move toward historical revisionism. It became an agency of aggressive national aggrandizement, clearly in service of Milošević’s political program—the establishment of a strong and unified Serbia that would, once again, be capable of dominating Yugoslavia and, failing that, go its own way together with all the territories in which the Serbs lived, including portions of Croatia and most of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Several Serbian historians—members of or associated with SANU—played a major role in this transformation. Academician Vasilije Dj. Krestić had a history of controversial publications before the memorandum. His collection *Srpsko-hrvatski odnosi i jugoslovenska ideja* (Serbo-Croat Relations and the Yugoslav Idea; 1983) portrayed the ideology of South Slavic reciprocity (Yugoslavism) among the Croats as essentially a case of self-interest that promoted Croat supremacy over the Serbs and Slovenes. The Croat Yugoslavists, according to Krestić, “accepted cooperation with Serbia and together with it and under its leadership sought to solve the South Slavic and Eastern Question only when they found themselves in a hopeless position and when all of their plans for primacy among the South Slavs, which [the Croats] would have had in a federally organized [Habsburg] Monarchy, ended in failure.”<sup>64</sup> Far more damaging was Krestić’s 1986 article “On the Origin of the Genocide of Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia,” in which he used ten quotes (spanning the period from 1700 to 1902), accounts of four incidents, and unpublished observations by a Croat politician to claim that the “genocide against the Serbs in [Ustaša] Croatia is a specific phenomenon in our [Serb] centuries-old common life with the Croats. The protracted development of the genocidal idea in certain centers of Croat society . . . did not necessarily have some narrow—but rather a broad—base, took deep roots in the consciousness of many generations.”<sup>65</sup> Krestić’s article became the sole academic inspiration for the increasingly less specific assertions about the “genocidal nature” of the Croats, a theory that justified the Serb insurgency in Croatia in 1990–1991.

The Serbian Academy’s most serious misstep before the memorandum was the publication of Veselin Djuretić’s *Saveznici i jugoslovenska ratna drama* (The Allies and the Yugoslav War Drama; 1985), which was condemned as a “defense of the Chetnik movement.”<sup>66</sup> This poorly researched and written work aroused undeserved attention on account of its intentionally provocative message, which found sponsorship in SANU’s Balkanological Institute. Djuretić set out to prove that the “myth of Serbian hegemony” contributed to the Allies’ misreading of interwar Yugoslav developments, prevented proper appreciation of the dimensions of genocide inflicted on the Serbs by Croat Ustašas, and created a need to impose symmetrical culpability for wartime carnage on both Croats and Serbs, thereby prejudging the choice of local clients in favor of antinationalist Communists instead of equally antifascist but nationalist Chetniks. In Djuretić’s conclusion,

<sup>63</sup> Djukić, *Kako se dogodio vodja*, 111, 121.

<sup>64</sup> Vasilije Dj. Krestić, *Srpsko-hrvatski odnosi i jugoslovenska ideja* (Belgrade, 1983), 150.

<sup>65</sup> Vasilije Krestić, “O genezi genocida nad Srbima u NDH,” *Književne novine* (September 15, 1986): 5.

<sup>66</sup> “Dr Djuretić isključen iz Saveza komunista,” *Politika* (November 6, 1985): 6. The author and the book’s two reviewers (Zoran Lakić and Savo Skoko) were expelled from the SKJ.

unlike the other nationalities that were on one or another embattled side, the Serbs were uniquely divided between the Communists and Chetniks. Serbian nationalists (Chetniks) were unable to counter the myths of Serbian hegemony and pro-Partisan sentiment among the Croats. Indeed, the “Croat and Muslim extremism (Ustašism)” succeeded in transforming itself into Communist “official policy,” thereby hoodwinking the undisciplined and nationally “unconstituted” Serbs. The result was that the Serbs could choose only between the “acceptance of the [Partisans] or death.”<sup>67</sup> Although Djuretić’s book was temporarily banned, Serbian polemicists defended his views against the criticisms of the “Zagreb circle,”<sup>68</sup> as did, more moderately, professional historians like Petranović.<sup>69</sup>

The final product of the SANU line was the monograph by Academician Milorad Ekmečić *Stvaranje Jugoslavije 1790–1918* (The Creation of Yugoslavia, 1790–1918), which appeared in 1989, the year of Milošević’s reintegration of Kosovo and Vojvodina, of his militant speech at Gazi Mestan at the 600th anniversary of Serbian defeat at the Field of Kosovo, when he said that the Serbs are “once again in battles and before battles. They are not armed battles, though that is not to be excluded.”<sup>70</sup> In his sophisticated narrative, which stands head and shoulders above the primitive efforts of Djuretić, Ekmečić returned to his old themes about the Catholic hand in the failure of Yugoslav integration. He was far more explicit in his speech at the public forum of Budva, Montenegro, on October 25, 1990, when he charged that “it is not the tragedy of Yugoslav communism that it historically failed to lift culture out of the vault of inferiority before religion, thereby preventing [culture] from becoming the foundation of a new association. The tragedy is that communism acquired this role.”<sup>71</sup>

Insisting on the culpability of the Catholic church, Ekmečić claimed that the “whole past of Yugoslav unification depended on the ability of churches to rationalize the division of a single linguistic cake. That is, during the [nineteenth and twentieth] centuries, the Yugoslavs were united only to the extent that the

<sup>67</sup> Veselin Djuretić, *Saveznici i jugoslovenska ratna drama*, 2 vols. (Belgrade, 1985), 2: 251, 253.

<sup>68</sup> The phrase belongs to journalist Milorad Vučelić, who charged that criticisms against various Serbian publications stem from “aggressive and orthodox monopolists in the public, journalistic, cultural, and ideational-political life of Croatia’s capital.” See Milorad Vučelić, “Protiv nove militantnosti,” *Književne novine* (October 1, 1985): 2. Slovenian historian Dušan Biber was actually the most devastating critic of Djuretić’s book. See Dušan Biber, “Naučna kuliserija jednog političkog pamfleta: U povodu knjige V. Djuretića, *Saveznici i jugoslovenska ratna drama*,” *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 17 (1985), no. 3: 95–119.

<sup>69</sup> Vidojko Veličković, ed., *Stručna rasprava o knjizi dr Veselina Djuretića “Saveznici i jugoslovenska ratna drama”* (Belgrade, 1985), 12–33. Djuretić had the last word on the controversy at the height of Milošević’s power in 1991: “We [Serbs] gave up our second chance for the formation of our state after the end of World War II. In the course of that war, we fought under different banners, but we experienced the most ironical position, that is, that the international dimension of our struggle became the means for the total destruction of Serb lands; that our blood, shed in the name of nebulous socialist or Communist ideas, in the name of the ideology of Mother Russia, that is, in league with Russia, which was in the hands of Satan, was used for the destruction of Yugoslavia and Serb lands.” Since Communist federalism succeeded in destroying the Serb lands, relief will come from the decommunized homeland of communism that Djuretić just visited: “into the center of Russia—New Russia which is in its slow but inevitable birth pangs, we have thrown a people that had disappeared, disappeared from Russia’s vision, only to emerge as a cosmic people. I am referring to the Serbs.” Veselin Djuretić, “Nova Rusija i Srbija,” *Pogledi* (September 6, 1991): 40–41.

<sup>70</sup> Slobodan Milošević, “Ravnopravni i složni odnosi uslov za opstanak Jugoslavije,” *Politika* (June 29, 1989): 4.

<sup>71</sup> Milorad Ekmečić, “Budućnost Jugoslavije,” *NIN* (November 16, 1990): 55.

Catholic church failed in maintaining Croat and Slovene separatism.” The South Slavs did not rise to full unitarism because the “churches divided us.” Hence the future of Yugoslavia could go either against the influence of religion (especially Catholicism) and into “spiritual unitarism such as never existed in history” or, alternatively, into “clericalism” and dissolution.<sup>72</sup> By 1991, in wake of the collapse of communism throughout Eastern Europe, the dissolution was at hand. Following the legalization of opposition parties in 1989–1990—and the victory of the opposition in the 1990 elections in Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina—Serbia and the Yugoslav People’s Army became increasingly isolated and determined to accept no further confederalization, much less independence, of the constituent republics. The declarations of independence by Slovenia and Croatia in June 1991 and the war that followed prompted an obituary for Yugoslavia in a leading Serbian cultural weekly: “Croatia and Slovenia are exiting from Yugoslavia with the Communist dowry, leaving behind them, in a garbage can, all the symbols, rituals, and party cards with which they acquired the dowry. Moreover, they are exiting from that notorious party and ideological state with spoils that they never would have won on the field of battle.”<sup>73</sup>

The non-Serb reaction to the rise of nationalist historiography in Serbia was inadequate and late. Moreover, as we have already seen in Croatia, much of this effort was mounted by orthodox Titoist polemicists, not genuine historians. Only in the late 1980s did real scholars like Ljubo Boban,<sup>74</sup> Bogdan Krizman, and Dušan Biber start responding to the avalanche of double standards and distortions. They were joined by demographers who took up the exaggerated claims about the war losses of 1941–1945, the stock subject of nationalist historiography.<sup>75</sup> Most non-Serb historians were silent or equivocating. Given the tight control of party censorship in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, almost everywhere outside Serbia proper except in Slovenia, popular historical works were rare and usually written by amateurs. Professional historians went about their business, avoiding political history in favor of noncontroversial social studies. The few Serb historians who raised their voices against the deluge were isolated in intellectual ghettos.<sup>76</sup>

“Today it is impossible to say,” Milošević argued at Gazi Mestan, “what is historical truth and what is legend in the battle of Kosovo. This is no longer even important.”<sup>77</sup> Yugoslav historiography could not survive the notion that the

<sup>72</sup> Ekmečić, “Budućnost,” 56. Ekmečić did not indulge in the crude anti-Catholic propaganda that arose in Serbia in the late 1980s. He simply legitimated the anti-Catholic literature of Dragoljub R. Živojinović, Vladimir Dedijer, and Milan Bulajić. On this subject, see Ivo Banac, “The Fearful Asymmetry of War: The Causes and Consequences of Yugoslavia’s Demise,” *Daedalus*, 121 (1992): 161–63, 173.

<sup>73</sup> Miodrag Perišić, “Kraj Jugoslavije,” *Književne novine* (July 1, 1991): 1.

<sup>74</sup> For Boban’s diligent efforts, see *Kontroverze iz povijesti Jugoslavije*, 3 vols. (Zagreb, 1987, 1989, 1990).

<sup>75</sup> The skillful and moderate work by an émigré Serbian statistician, Bogoljub Kočović, was supplemented by a Croat demographer, Vladimir Žerjavić. See Bogoljub Kočović, *Žrtve Drugog svjetskog rata u Jugoslaviji* (London, 1985); Vladimir Žerjavić, *Gubici stanovništva Jugoslavije u drugom svjetskom ratu* (Zagreb, 1989); Žerjavić, *Opsesije i megalomanije oko Jasenovca i Bleiburga* (Zagreb, 1992).

<sup>76</sup> The following works of three quite different scholars are notable: Ivan Djurić, *Istorija—pribežiste ili putokaz* (Sarajevo, 1990); Andrej Mitrović, *Raspravljjanja sa Klio* (Sarajevo, 1991); Drago Roksanđić, *Srbi u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb, 1991); Roksanđić, *Srpska i hrvatska povijest i ‘nova historija’* (Zagreb, 1991).

<sup>77</sup> Milošević, “Ravnopravni i složni odnosi,” 3.

distinction between historical truth and popular legends was not a matter of importance. It could not survive the notion that there were different truths, negotiated by professional historians. The one-sided war of historians is notable because legends and ideological distortions were often promulgated by the best historians, not by amateurs. Yugoslav historiography was never harmoniously arranged. Now, it no longer exists. This means that the historiographies of the successor states will be unequal in harmony, quality, and orientation, according to the level of ideologization in each. The historical guild will have a difficult task in removing not only the heritage of the Communist *dirigisme* but also the consequences of the postcommunist chasm. This article has suggested that the dissolution of Yugoslav historiography occurred because of the continuity of partisan loyalties to changing ideological banners. It cannot answer why so many changed their Marxist allegiances (if such they were) so quickly (if they did so) to introduce (or reflect) the new political requirements. The consequences for historiography, but also for ordinary human lives, are vast.

IN 1984, AMID VARIOUS HISTORICAL POLEMICS, Mexican writer Roberto Salinas Price tickled the fancy of the Yugoslav public with his novel theory about the location of Homeric sites. Troy, he claimed, was really at Gabela, a Hercegovinian village on the right bank of the Neretva River, downstream from Čapljina. Frustrated classicists, whose inability to anticipate Salinas's theories became a source of considerable disparagement in the press, responded with a sardonic quiz, whereby the most gullible respondents were proclaimed Trojans: "You have a stomach of steel, a real Trojan stomach, despite the Bronze Age. You can devour everything, nothing can make you ill, nothing can surprise you. You are blessed because you have believed but cannot see. Yours is the kingdom of Troy."<sup>78</sup>

At the time of this writing, the Neretva valley is a great cauldron of war. Čapljina and Gabela are among the many towns and villages that the Yugoslav People's Army has bombed in April and May 1992 in its war against Bosnia-Hercegovina. The Trojan fancy has turned into Hecuba's veiling. But it is Ilok, more so than the bombed slopes of the Hercegovinian Ida, that has produced the most graphic images of the Yugoslav war. In October 1991, slightly more than twelve years after the memorable congress that initiated the war of historians, the army obliged 10,000 Croats to leave Ilok. Instead of performing a solemn rite on the seventy-third anniversary of Yugoslavia, the people of Ilok packed their cars and carts with everything they could carry and took off toward the west. A photograph of a kerchiefed grandmother being searched by two stern army women is particularly memorable.<sup>79</sup> "No terms can be made with Fate. I have just now seen Cassandra dragged away by force."<sup>80</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Roberto Salinas Price, *Homer's Blind Audience: An Essay on the Iliad's Geographical Prerequisites for the Site of Ilios* (1980; San Antonio, Tex., 1983); Bruna Kuntić-Makvić, "Veliki prigodni kviz: Jeste li Trojanac?" *Troja i kako je steći*, Zlatko Šešelj, ed. (Zagreb, 1985), 82.

<sup>79</sup> Dejan Oršić, "Ilok: Egzodus Hrvata," *Arena* (October 26, 1991): 2–5.

<sup>80</sup> Euripides, *Trojan Women*, 616–17.