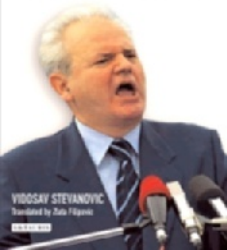


MILOSEVIC

THE PEOPLE'S TYRANT



VIDOSAV STEVANOVIĆ

Translated by Zata Filipović

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

MILOSEVIC

Publisher's Preface

Milosevic: A People's Tyrant is not so much a history as a historical document. Less analysis than testimony, it tells the story of Slobodan Milosevic's inexorable rise to power and the turmoil he brought with him. Vidosav Stevanovic, its author, is not a dispassionate, academic observer; he is a Serbian novelist and a liberal who, until Milosevic forced him into exile, was heavily implicated in the politics of his country.

Stevanovic wrote his book in Paris. He used his diaries and his conversations with the exiled members of his circle to whom he had access, to piece together a study of the explosion of ultra-nationalism on the Balkans. In this too the book serves as a historical document of what was and what could be known about the atrocities committed across the region in the 1990s.

But perhaps most importantly Stevanovic's work stands, like Solzhenitzyn's, as a conscience call. Its impressionism is rhetorical; Stevanovic the novelist has turned his pen to politics. In its denunciations of the corruption, both moral and social, of Serbia, *Milosevic: A People's Tyrant* is a manifesto – subjective, impassioned, desperate and political. It is these very qualities that merit its publication in English.

MILOSEVIC
The People's Tyrant

Vidosav Stevanovic

Edited by Trude Johansson
Translated by Zlata Filipovic

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Map of the former Yugoslavia

THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA



Acronyms and Abbreviations

AIDS	auto immune deficiency syndrome
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (of the USA)
CNN	Cable News Network
DEPOS	Democratic Movement (<i>pockret</i>) of Serbia
DOS	Democratic Opposition of Serbia
DPS	Democratic Party of Serbia
EC	European Community
EU	European Union
HDZ	<i>Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica</i> (Croat Democratic Party)
ICDSM	International Committee to Defend Slobodan Milosevic
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia
IMRO	Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization
JA	<i>Jugoslovenska Armija</i> (former Yugoslav Army, or JNA)
JAT	Yugoslav airline
JNA	Yugoslav National Army
JUL	<i>Jugoslovenska Udružena Levica</i> (United Left Wing of Yugoslavia)
KGB	<i>Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti</i> (Russian Committee of State Security)
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
NATO	North American Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
OVK	<i>Oslobodilacka Vojska Kosova</i> (Kosovo Liberation Army)
OZN	<i>Odeljenje Zastite Naroda</i> (Popular Defence Division)
SANU	Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences
SAO	<i>Srpska Autonomna Oblast</i> (Serb Autonomous Region)

Acronyms and Abbreviations

SDA	<i>Stranka Demokratske Akcije</i> (Party for Democratic Action)
SDG/SSJ	Arkan's groups. SDG – Serb Volunteer Guard or 'Tigers'/SSJ – <i>Stranka Serpskog Yedintsva</i> or United Serbian Party
SDS	<i>Srpska Demokratska Stranka</i> (Serbian Democratic Party)
SFRJ	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
SKJ	<i>Savez Komunista Jugoslavije</i> Communist League of Yugoslavia
SPO	<i>Srpski Pokret Obnove</i> (led by Draskovic) (Movement for Serbian Renewal)
SPS	<i>Socijalisticka Partija Srbije</i> (Socialist Party of Serbia)
SRJ	<i>Savezna Republika Jugoslavija</i> (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia)
SRS	<i>Srpska Radikalna Stranka</i> (led by Seselj) (Serbian Radical Party)
SS	<i>Srpski Sabor</i> (Serbian Assembly)
TANJUG	Telegraphic Agency of New Yugoslavia
UCK	<i>Ushtria Clirimtare E Kosova</i> (Kosovo Liberation Army)
UDB	<i>Unutrasnja Drzavna Bezbednost</i> (Internal State Security)
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VMA	<i>Vojno Medicinska Akademija</i> (Military Medical Academy)

Foreword by Zlata Filipovic

When Slobodan Milosevic went on trial, I felt I might finally be able to draw a line under a part of my life I wish I had never lived. I felt I might be able to bring some sort of closure to a trauma that has lasted over a decade, a trauma that began as war rolled into my native Sarajevo. I am still waiting.

The story of the war in former Yugoslavia is slowly being forgotten. We have forgotten the buses filled with orphaned babies, tied to their seats leaving Sarajevo, rushing through sniper fire and falling shells. We have forgotten the old people's homes where the elderly died quietly of cold. We have forgotten the hospitals filled with bodies; we have forgotten the Market Place massacre, and the shelling of starving civilians as they queued for bread and water. Images of football fields turned into cemeteries, of broken glass, of devastated buildings, of the barely living, the wounded and the dead have merged with other images of suffering elsewhere in the world, and these in turn are being forgotten too.

Only the numbers remain – 13 years since the start of the madness, over 250,000 dead, five million displaced, thousands missing, wounded, scarred, widowed or orphaned. For those of us who lived and survived, the war will always be present. It took away my childhood, destroyed my parents' lives and poured suffering into my grandparents' final years. Its legacy – shattered countries, cultures and peoples, and shattered individual lives – lives on and will mark generations to come.

Vidosav Stevanovic describes Milosevic as a little man of no particular greatness who rose from the greyness of bureaucracy and anonymity at a moment in which no one in the world was prepared to stop him. That makes him the product of us all. Circumstance made him the face of former Yugoslavia in the last decade, and for me, he represented a whole era of horror that defined my life, that of my parents and so many others.

Today, something seems to be changing. As time passes and Milosevic's trial drags on, he is paling out of the immediate memory too. The trial will end, whatever the outcome. But can that really be the end for

Foreword by Zlata Filipovic

us all? My pain, the pain of Vidosav Stevanovic, and that of so many people scattered across the Balkans and those forced to become refugees and exiles will of course never heal. Milosevic's end – if it ever comes – will never be enough. He remains not only in our memory but also in the daily facts of life of millions of those whose lives were forever changed by that period of barbarism he headed and symbolized. Returned to the greyness from which he emerged, he remains a livid scar in all our lives.

Zlata Filipovic

Preface by Trude Johansson

This book is about a man no one really seems to know. Its author tries to piece together the jigsaw of his fractured character. It is about Milosevic the boy, Milosevic the politician, Milosevic the family man, Milosevic the loner and, ultimately, Milosevic the failure. The story of Milosevic, his family and his compatriots is a story of pitiless brutality and suffering. Every single member of the Milosevic family has taken part in crimes against others, more often than not with murderous conclusions. Slobodan Milosevic is on trial at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague; his wife, Mira Markovic is expected to join him, having been indicted for the murder of former president Ivan Stambolic who disappeared in August 2000.

Slobodan Milosevic first appeared before the ICTY on 3 July 2001 where he pleaded 'not-guilty' to all charges laid against him for crimes committed in Kosovo. On 29 October 2001 he subsequently pleaded 'not-guilty' to all counts of crimes committed in Croatia. On 11 December 2001 he pleaded 'not guilty' to charges concerning crimes in Bosnia. The Kosovo indictment has seen him charged with four counts of crimes against humanity and one count of violations of the laws or customs of war. For crimes in Croatia he has been charged with nine grave breaches of the 1949 Geneva Convention, thirteen counts of violations of the laws and the customs of war and ten counts of crimes against humanity. For crimes in Bosnia, he has been charged with two counts of genocide, ten counts of crimes against humanity, eight counts of grave breaches of the Geneva Convention and nine counts of violations of the laws or customs of war. All these charges are based on both individual and superior criminal responsibility. On 12 February 2002 his trial for crimes committed in Kosovo began, with the trial for crimes in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina commencing a few months later on 26 September 2002. Milosevic does not recognize the international court.

Throughout the whole trial Milosevic has chosen to defend himself. He rejected the prosecutor's demands that the tribunal appoint a lawyer for him

Preface by Trude Johansson

in November 2002, stating 'The prosecution is trying to prevent me from speaking and also trying to impose on me a puppet lawyer, which they have absolutely no right to do.'¹

At the start of the judiciary process, it was estimated that the prosecution would tie up its case within 14 months, by April 2003. But Milosevic's frequent bouts of illness made that impossible. The case for the prosecution ended in February 2004. All told, that is almost two years. According to the rules of the tribunal, Milosevic will have the same amount of time at his disposal. Milosevic, who has refused to enter a plea in his ongoing trial and still refuses to recognize the validity of the court trying him, will open his defence on 8 June. The 1600 witnesses he has so far called include Tony Blair and ex-President Bill Clinton.

So far, the trial has been suspended nine times due to Milosevic's ill health – he suffers from high blood pressure, which shows no signs of abating. The trial is expected to continue until 2006. It will have been the longest and most expensive trial in the history of the tribunal.

Since his imprisonment, Slobodan Milosevic's nationalist dreams for Serbia and Yugoslavia have disintegrated. With the signing of the new constitution in February 2003, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has become Serbia and Montenegro. But if Milosevic's ideals no longer taunt his country, his legacy very much lives on, as do his methods. Democracy, modernization, development and economic growth have been slow in coming. They may yet again grind completely to a halt.

On 12 March 2003, Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic was assassinated in Belgrade. With him died many of the hopes of the new Serbia. Djindjic was one of the foremost spokesmen for democracy in Serbia and the man on whom the rest of Europe counted to lead Serbia into a new era. Just two weeks later, on 27 March 2003, the body of Ivan Stambolic, former president of Serbia was also found. Stambolic disappeared in August 2000: prime suspects for the abduction and murder were Milosevic's special police forces. Both Milosevic and his wife have been charged along with former special police chief Milorad Lukovic. Lukovic is also a chief suspect in the assassination of Djindjic, as is former Serbian state security chief Radomir Markovic.

Several of the Milosevic regime's most prominent members are still on the loose. Although Arkan, the notorious Serb paramilitary leader responsible for some of the worst outrages in Bosnia, was assassinated in 2000, in

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what might have been a Milosevic-ordered attack, his Tigers still operate in parts of Serbia. Several other paramilitary organizations are still at large. Radovan Karadzic is still alive, and is avoiding Interpol. He was indicted by The Hague at the same time as Milosevic, but has so far escaped capture. It is suspected that he is somewhere in Republika Srpska, though his whereabouts remain uncertain. Ratko Mladic is also still at large. There have been several attempts to capture him, among others by storming his late mother's house on the day she died, the most recent being on 26 August 2003. The Hague tribunal indicted Mladic at the same time as Milosevic and Karadzic.

In politics, most of Milosevic's cronies remain active in the new country. In the parliamentary elections of December 2003, the ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party headed by Vojislav Selselj, currently also detained in The Hague on charges of genocide and war crimes, won over a third of the seats, more than any other party. If Vojislav Kostunica were able to stay in power, he could only do so by relying on the backing of the Serbian Socialist Party (SPS), still nominally headed by Milosevic (who has vowed to return to politics after his trial). The clear favourite for presidential elections in June 2004 is the nationalist extremist Tomislav Nikolic, the former gravedigger of Stevanovic's hometown of Kraguyevac, who runs the Serbian Radical Party in Seselj's absence.

There is an International Committee to Defend Slobodan Milosevic (ICDSM) that believes that the allegations against him are fabricated by the anti-Serb world. The leader of their American branch claims that:

1. The Hague is a tool the UN Security Council created illegally under orders from Washington; violating all legal standards it demonizes and brutalizes Serbian leaders and Serbian people.
2. NATO and its proxy forces are guilty of war crimes. Covering this up is a key function of the Tribunal.
3. The media have systematically lied, slandering the Serbian people, in coordination with NATO and its solely owned subsidiary, the Tribunal.²

Milosevic's story is far from over. The long shadows of the Milosevic regime still darken Serbia's future.

Norway, 2004

Chronology

- 1986: (*May*) Milosevic becomes Serbian regional Communist Party president.
- 1987: (*March/April*) Milosevic intervenes on behalf of Kosovo Serbs who allege persecution by Albanian majority.
- 1988: (*January*) Milosevic's supporters oust Serbian state president Ivan Stambolic.
- 1989: (*June*) Milosevic addresses one million Serbs at Kosovo Polje on 600th anniversary of Turks' defeat of mediaeval Serb kingdom. (*November*) Milosevic elected president of Serbia.
- 1990: (*January*) SKJ dissolves. (*December*) Milosevic re-elected as president of Serbia in multiparty elections.
- 1991: (*June*) Croatia and Slovenia declare their independence of Yugoslavia. Yugoslav military fails to crush Slovenian independence. Fighting breaks out in Croatia between Croats and minority Serbs. (*December*) EU agrees to recognize independence of any former Yugoslav republic that is democratic, respects human rights and protects ethnic minorities. Serbs declare their independence in Krajina province of Croatia. Bosnian Serbs declare an independent republic within Bosnia.
- 1992: (*January*) EU recognizes Croatia and Slovenia. (*February/March*) Bosnia's Muslims and Croats vote in referendum for independence; Serbs boycott polls. (*April*) EU and USA recognize Bosnia-Herzegovina. Civil war starts between Bosnian government and Bosnian Serbs. Bosnian Serb forces initiate siege of Sarajevo. SRJ created. (*May*) UN imposes sanctions on Serbia for supporting Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia.
- 1993: (*January*) War breaks out between Bosnian Croats and Muslims. (*October*) Milosevic dissolves Serbian parliament and calls new elections.
- 1995: (*August*) NATO launches air strikes against Bosnian Serb targets. (*November*) Dayton peace agreement to end the Bosnian civil war. (*December*) Peace agreement signed in Paris.
- 1996: (*April*) KLA starts attacking Serbian targets in Kosovo. (*November*)

Chronology

Serbian opposition tries to oust Milosevic following allegations of electoral fraud.

1997: (*July*) Milosevic becomes president of Yugoslavia.

1998: (*February*) Serbian security forces begin offensive against KLA. (*June/July*) Serb forces take back positions lost to KLA in Kosovo. (*September*) NATO issues ultimatum to Milosevic to end violence in Kosovo. (*October*) Serbs scale down military and security presence in Kosovo.

1999: (*6 February*) Rambouillet talks begin, but Kosovo Albanians reject peace plan. (*March*) Talks continue and Kosovo Albanians accept peace plan. Yugoslav representative rejects peace plan. Start of NATO military action in Kosovo. (*May*) UN war crimes tribunal indicts Milosevic as war criminal. (*June*) Milosevic capitulates and Serb forces withdraw from Kosovo.

2000: (*April*) In anti-Milosevic demonstrations in Belgrade 100,000 mass to demand early elections. (*May*) Opposition unites when 18 Serbian political parties form DOS. Government increases repression and blames all unrest on fifth columnists working for NATO countries. (*July*) Milosevic sets presidential, parliamentary and local elections. (*August*) Opposition launches anti-Milosevic campaign under slogan, 'He's Finished!' (*September*) Large turnout at national elections. Vojislav Kostunica wins presidential election; Milosevic rejects result. Opposition calls for general strike. (*October*) European leaders call for Milosevic to step down. Hundreds of thousands of anti-Milosevic protestors peacefully parade in Belgrade. Strikes paralyse country. Milosevic resigns.

2001: (*January*) UN war crimes prosecutor demands Milosevic's extradition. (*April*) Belgrade authorities arrest Milosevic. (*June*) Serbian PM Zoran Djindjic agrees to his extradition. Milosevic transferred to ICTY in The Hague. Kostunica and Djindjic at odds over the extradition; Zoran Zizic resigns in protest over it. (*July*) Milosevic makes first appearance at UN war crimes tribunal and pleads not guilty to all counts. (*August*) As political differences with Djindjic grow, Kostunica's DPS pulls out of Serbian government in protest over alleged corruption. (*September*) UN lifts arms embargo against Yugoslavia. (*October*) Milosevic pleads not guilty to all counts on Croatia indictment. (*December*) Also pleads not guilty on Bosnia indictment.

2002: (*February*) Prosecution open case against Milosevic. Ibrahim Rugova elected president by Kosovan parliament. (*March*) Yugoslav, Serbian and Montenegrin leaders sign a EU sponsored agreement to set up a new state to

Chronology

be called Serbia and Montenegro in place of Yugoslavia. (*April*) Montenegrin government collapses over differences on new union of Serbia and Montenegro. (*May*) Milosevic faces President Ibrahim Rugova of Kosovo in court. (*October*) Run-off Serbian presidential elections, in which Vojislav Kostunica wins majority, are declared invalid because not enough people turn out to vote. Montenegrin elections result in a vote of confidence in the new union of Serbia and Montenegro. (*November*) President Djukanovic resigns to take on more powerful position of PM of Montenegro. (*December*) Low turnout invalidates Serbian presidential elections. Parliament speaker Natasa Micić becomes acting president. Low turnout also invalidates Montenegrin presidential election.

2003: (*January*) Serbian president Milan Milutinovic surrenders to The Hague tribunal where he pleads not guilty to charges of crimes against humanity. Serbian and Montenegrin parliaments approve constitutional charter for new union of Serbia and Montenegro. (*March*) Parliament elects Svetozar Marovic president of Serbia and Montenegro. (*May*) Prosecutors win 100 extra trial days for Milosevic case. Filip Vujanovic elected Montenegrin president in third round of voting. Milosevic questions Slovene ex-president Milan Kucan. (*June*) Yugoslav ex-president says Mr Milosevic had nothing to do with Srebrenica massacre. (*October*) First direct talks between Serbian and Kosovan leaders since 1999. (*November*) Another attempt to elect a Serbian president fails because of low election turnout. David Owen testifies against Milosevic. (*December*) Serbian parliamentary elections are inconclusive leading to extensive coalition talks between various political parties. US general Wesley Clark testifies against Milosevic. UN sets out conditions for final status talks in 2005.

2004: (*February*) Prosecutors rest their case against Milosevic. (*March*) Former Yugoslav president Vojislav Kostunica becomes PM of Serbia in centre-right coalition government that relies on support of Milosevic's Socialist Party. Serbia's first major war crimes trial opens in Belgrade when several Serbs face trial for 1991 murder of Croatian civilians in town of Vukovar. Worst ethnic clashes between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo since 1999 after violence erupts in divided town of Mitrovica. (*June*) Milosevic to begin his defence. Presidential elections in Serbia.

Chapter 1

The Friendless Orphan

The male name Slobodan derives from the Serbian word *sloboda*, which means freedom. It denotes a free individual; Slobodan Jovanovic, a nineteenth-century scientist, writer and politician who died in exile was the first to bear it. Over time, the popularity of the name grew and spread across the region. Given the Serbian habit of replacing names with nicknames, Slobodan was reduced to Sloba, or indeed *mali Sloba* ('little Sloba') by family and friends. Thousands of such 'little Slobas' exist throughout Serbian towns and villages.

One particular Slobodan became known as 'Sloba-Sloboda' to Serbs at home and abroad; this version was a noun instead of a name, representing a concept rather than a mere individual. 'Sloba-Sloboda' represented the notion of freedom at a time when it was eagerly anticipated in the whole of Eastern Europe. As it turned out, he turned away from freedom, instead leading his people into the quicksand of nationalism. Paradoxically for Serbs and Europeans alike, by generally embodying so many of the different facets of freedom while specifically embodying its denial, this figure has made himself unique in the history of the modern Serbian state.

This is the story of Slobodan Milosevic, a lawyer by education, a politician, an anti-democrat, a semi-dictator, the president of Serbia elected at its first open elections, the president of the newly created Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, the defeated candidate in the 2000 elections, the leader overthrown by his nation's revolt and, most recently, the prisoner in the Scheveningen gaol and in the dock facing The Hague tribunal. Over the years the Western media have called him the strong man of Belgrade, a great tactician and even the butcher of the Balkans. But today the Serbs themselves have finally begun to understand the duality of his nature, so long concealed. On the one hand he was our Sloba, the new Saint Sava, the most talented Serbian politician of the twentieth century, a lamb among wolves, and on the other he was the 'Devil from Dedinje'. His enemies and

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opponents secretly respected him, and his admirers and associates feared his unpredictability. No one was indifferent to him: he provoked extreme and conflicting reactions in people. It was this polarizing duality that lay behind the countless mistakes and tragic misunderstandings that shattered what was once Yugoslavia.

The legend of Milosevic has overshadowed that of Tito. The more we discover about him, the less we understand of him. What do we really know? Almost nothing. Indeed, as a politician and as a human being he may yet turn out to have been exactly that – almost nothing.

He was born at the beginning of the Second World War in the Balkans, in August 1941, five months after the disintegration of the first Yugoslavia.¹ On the day of fascism's defeat he was four years old. But we know very little about his childhood – no official biographical portrait tells us about the child, the boy, about Sloba the young man.

Milosevic excised his own past, leaving only a shadow. No family photographs have been found, and no explanation has been offered as to why. There are no pictures of little Sloba and his parents out on a picnic, there are no pictures of the boy sitting at a Sunday lunch or among classmates. No school records or old identity cards have surfaced. Researching him is like chasing an illegal activist who had destroyed all incriminating evidence. A profound inextinguishable neurosis drove him to obliterate his past.

Alfred Adler wrote that the neurotic personality is driven by a desire for power. Milosevic's whole being has been dominated by the will to power and he has never grown out of the wounds of his childhood. Communism had taught him early that the end justifies the means. In a time of peace, the consequences of his neurotic ambition might have been unimportant, but in the context of civil war they proved devastating.

The Milosevic family is of Montenegrin origin, from a region of Lijeva Rijeka – a remote, sparsely inhabited place that has never been fully subdued by any central power. In the past these highlanders would sweep down to the valleys on lightning raids, then return to the mountains with their plunder. The mountain population was very small and grindingly poor; its only cultural asset consisted of the epic songs that glorified these

The Friendless Orphan

people's thefts and raids, accompanied by the wail of the *gusle*, the traditional stringed instrument of those parts.

Slobodan's father Svetozar began his working life as an Orthodox priest. After the Second World War he was expelled from the clergy for denouncing his colleagues to the new authorities. He divorced and his former wife kept their young son, little Sloba; the elder son Borislav went with his father.² The reasons for the divorce are unknown. For a few years Svetozar taught history at a secondary school in Montenegro, where his pupils nicknamed him *Saint Horror*. A lonely, friendless, rancorous figure, he was apt to pick fights with the other teachers. He was known to deliver loud sermons in a field outside the town to an audience of upright stones that resembled walking men. In 1962 he was found dead in this place. He had shot himself through the head. The reasons for his suicide are unknown.³

Slobodan's mother was a Communist Party worker and headmistress of a school in Pozarevac, east Serbia. Former students described Comrade Stanislava as a strict, just person with no personal connections to people of her milieu. When she was not busy with party duties, she was raising little Sloba. He neither played football nor knew how to swim and neighbours remember how he hated getting his shoes dirty in the muddy streets of Pozarevac. He was the best pupil in his school and was known to dread his mother's wrath if he let his standards slip. Due to his fragile health, little Sloba was regularly exempted from physical education classes.

Just as her son was beginning his secondary education, Stanislava met her future daughter-in-law, Mirjana Markovic, an orphan. Mirjana had been raised in an old house without a bathroom by her widowed maternal grandmother, who wore black every day of her life. The pair saw very few people; they avoided what family they had, and their neighbours avoided them. But Slobodan and Mirjana were inseparable from the moment they met in December 1958. Together they went on to university in Belgrade after they had completed their secondary education.⁴ Both won state scholarships, which were awarded only to a very select few. After this, their visits to Pozarevac grew more and more infrequent, no doubt because both their childhood memories of the place were so bitter.

In 1972, Sloba's lonely mother followed the example of her ex-husband and killed herself. Few memories of her, either good or bad, remain. Her son, now a young official of the Law Faculty Party Organization, paid

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punctiliously regular visits to his mother's grave but never in the presence of Mirjana, who had by then become his wife.⁵ 'Comrade Mirjana' hated cemeteries. She had been born in prison during the war to Vera Markovic Miletic, an illegal activist, whose execution (so one version goes) was delayed only by her pregnancy. As the developing baby neared birth, so the mother neared the date of her execution. There is no official record of Vera's execution, but what is certain is that Mirjana was abandoned immediately after her birth and never met her mother.

Mirjana had grown up to be a somewhat plain girl with lank hair and a penchant for heavy make-up. Her first encounter with Little Sloba probably took place in the schoolyard. No doubt the passionate drive for power they recognized in one another sprang from the same source – a terror of death, which had blighted both their childhoods, and a need to overcome it. It was this that gave their relationship its immense strength. No one could separate them because they were only interested in each other. They cut themselves off from the rest of the world and surrendered to the similarity that united them. Communism supplied the screen that insulated them from the world: inevitably, because dogmatic Marxism had ready-made answers to all their questions. They had both joined communist youth organizations very young and had since become unshakeable supporters of totalitarianism.

Each represented for the other a substitute for society. Mirjana filled the void left by little Sloba's mother, shielded him from his fear of women and protected him from the friends whose trust he suspected and despised. In return, he replaced her absent father. Motherless, she mothered him. Fatherless, he fathered her.

Mirjana's mother Vera and her aunt Davorjanka Paunovic were two beautiful sisters from Pozarevac who led dramatic lives. During the war, Davorjanka, nicknamed Zdenka, became the mistress and indispensable confidante of Josip Broz, by then already known as Tito, following him through all his campaigns as a partisan commander.⁶ Tito's associates and subordinates bitterly resented Zdenka: they were willing to be ruled by Josip Broz, but the fact that his mistress had such an ascendancy over the leader made her very dangerous. The affair continued after the war, even more passionately than before. The lovers adored each other, at times with a passion that bordered on violence. The affair ended with the beautiful Zdenka's untimely death from tuberculosis.⁷ Tito, heartbroken, ordered that she be buried in the garden of the White Castle at Dedinje in Belgrade.

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Vera also played a prominent part in Yugoslav-Serb history. During the war, she was a member of an important underground movement and the mistress of several high-ranking officials in the party. It is still rumoured that Tito was among these lovers and that she had carried his child. While carrying out an undercover mission, Vera was caught and tortured by the Gestapo.⁸ She denounced the entire Belgrade resistance network in what was recorded as the worst calamity in the wartime history of the party. Remarkably, one of the Gestapo officers present took pity on her and saved her life. One story claims that he fell in love with the beautiful partisan and looked after the baby girl she had later in gaol. At this point the accounts of Vera's life become vague. Some say she was executed by the resistance at the liberation of Belgrade, others that she escaped to Germany with her Gestapo lover, where she still lives today under an assumed name.⁹ Apart from the certain fact that she gave birth to a daughter who was sent to Serbia to be brought up by her grandmother, there exists no verifiable account of Vera's postwar career.

The child was named Mirjana, a derivative of the word *Mir* (peace). She took her surname, Markovic, from a party executive who acknowledged her as his daughter some ten years after her birth. When she grew up she decided to call herself Mira, a name her mother had once used as an alias. She clung so hard to her fragile identity that when she married Milosevic she refused to take his name. This, however, was all she wished to preserve of her past, since she immediately severed all relations with her half-sisters and nominal father. Slobodan was the only person with whom she communed; constantly together, they gradually merged into a single unit capable of confronting the world. Those outside their charmed circle existed only as faceless shadows, with value only insofar as they could be manipulated to advantage.

Yugoslavia was comprised of six republics, two autonomous provinces¹⁰ and 20 national minorities. Its critics viewed it as a conceptual madness created from the fallen remains of two great empires: the Ottoman and the Austro-Hungarian. Its apologists praised it for being the perfect model of an ethnically diverse and integrated society. This Babel-like compound of languages, cultures, customs and histories was held together not by a gov-

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ernment, constitution and legal system but by the cult of Tito's personality and what was perceived as a specifically Yugoslav form of socialism. Tito embodied both power and unity. Yugoslav socialism was felt to be unique in its capacity to maintain a balance between the capitalist West and the Stalinist East. The unity of Yugoslavia was complex and fragile: it existed both as a Marxist single entity and as a collection of separate national factions. Censuses used two categories to record Yugoslavia's population: citizenship (Yugoslav) and nationality (any on the list). Every Yugoslav had a dual identity. He or she could be a Yugoslav and a Serb, a Yugoslav and a Croat, a Yugoslav and an Albanian. It was not possible, however, to be a Serb first and a Yugoslav second. Nationality could never take precedence over citizenship. Only nationalists and intellectuals who deliberately defined their identity according to different criteria perceived this system as contradictory and thereby prepared the ground for what would later be known as a 'national identity'.

At the end of the Second World War, the communists took power in Yugoslavia. At the time the country was overwhelmingly rural, with only a few industrialized cities and regions. Workers were scarce. The dictatorship of the people, backed by Soviet tanks, was proclaimed but it was really only the dictatorship of a small circle of party leaders. Before long, power had become concentrated in the hands of one man, Tito. The growth of his personality cult ran parallel to the growth of the working class, the one absent but essential element for sustaining the credibility of the new ideology. More and more people migrated from the countryside to the cities to find work in the newly built factories. The villages were drained of their youth while the towns, brimming with newcomers, began to lose their identities and succumb to village superstitions and suburban fantasies.

The new ideology was bent on creating a new class system. Yugoslavia did not consider itself a nation-state like Germany, nor a state-nation like France, but something altogether different and unique. The issue of nationality still had to be confronted, associated as it was with memories of slaughter and savage conflict. The communists concluded that the best way of facing this issue was to keep the promise that they had made during the war to ensure the support of the majority: all peoples would be guaranteed the right to exercise their specific culture and speak their own language.

To avert a revival of past conflicts – and to establish a base for certain

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party structures – a set of new ‘nations’ was created. The national question was pronounced solved, and was briskly swept under the carpet.

Montenegro was one. It had previously had its own state and ruling dynasty.¹¹ The Montenegrins’ request to form an independent nation was quickly granted. However, there was a strong current of dualism in Montenegrin opinion. Some considered themselves super-Serbs, pure specimens of a greater nation that was destined to lead them. Others preferred Montenegrin to Serbo-Croat as their national language, denied all connection with the Serbs and even claimed Celtic origins.

Then there were Bosnian Slavs, who had adopted Islam but kept their language during the long Ottoman occupation of their region. In Serbia, these were referred to as ‘Turkish converts’. Since they were living side by side with Serbs and Croats, their national position needed to be redefined. By party decision they were pronounced Muslims, with Serbo-Croat as their official language.¹²

In the eyes of the single party known as the Communist League (subdivided into nine parties, also called Communist Leagues),¹³ regional nationalism was considered a mortal sin, the greater nation being absolutely paramount. Notions of nationality were not only contrary to Marxist notions of class identity, they were also perceived as a blatant device for career advancement. In addition to having a republic, a province and rights guaranteed under the law, each nation and national minority had its own list of cadres who occupied positions in the republic and the federation. Interminable conflicts arose among the various parties about whose names should appear on these lists. At times, these party conflicts swelled into small-scale national conflicts, which Tito solved by conferring privileges on certain individuals and by removing them from others, or else by abolishing them altogether. Punishment for deviants who did not follow the party line was not severe, since the party did not consider prison and political murder appropriate deterrents. Even the camp at Goli Otok lost its original function as a centre of penal and correctional punishment. People were simply sent into retirement and that was often the last that was heard of them.

A comrade, once he had been thrown out of the party, lost the right to exercise his profession. He was condemned to accept a pension and expected to socialize only with those who had shared a similar fate. The various arms of the secret police (the number of which has never been fully

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established – there were perhaps six, seven or more different branches) closely supervised this ‘retirement process’.

When Slobodan had completed his studies at the Law Faculty, he embarked on his career. As a ‘Serb of Montenegrin origin’ he succeeded in securing a place for himself on the Serbian list of cadres. His elder brother, Borislav, the future ‘Montenegrin of Serbian origin’ appeared on the Montenegrin list. Having the same parents was no guarantee that you belonged to the same nation: ‘nationality’ was dictated much more by the relationship between the individual in question and the party.

No particularly strong bond seems to have existed between the brothers. They saw each other as members of the same party and seldom met in private. Slobodan’s wife Mirjana was always reluctant to spend time with other women, including her sister-in-law, but this was not the only reason. The elder Milosevic was a successful diplomat: having served as the Yugoslavian ambassador to Algeria, he was appointed police chief in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His success was not due to any special expertise but stemmed instead from the power held by the different republics’ cadre lists. The cadre list that represented just half a million Montenegrins was the same size as the one that represented ten million Serbs, and the influence Montenegrins exerted on the creation of the Serbian lists was disproportionately heavy. Contrary to their Serbian counterparts, the Slovenians, Croats, Bosnians, Macedonians, Albanians and Voivodins maintained very tight control over their lists and refused to allow any manipulation from outside.

The motto of the internationalists under Tito was ‘end nationalism, promote the nation’. Tito ruled during a period of mild communism, or ‘socialism with a human face’ (terminologically distinct from ‘real socialism’), and at this time nationalism was considered a cardinal sin. The struggle against nationalism was an integral and compulsory part of party programmes, congresses and assemblies. All reports began and ended with attacks on nationalism. Party executives each maintained his or her own nationality, lived in state-owned ‘socialized’ apartments, spent holidays at special resorts, received medical treatment at the Military Medical Academy (exclusively reserved for senior executive members), all the while tirelessly and mechanically repeating slogans against nationalism and private ownership.

The republics were no more than the constituent elements of a feder-

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ation. Nevertheless they were referred to as states – since that was what they strove to be. At the federal level, the republics defended their own interests, meaning that they gave away as little as possible themselves and took as much as they could from other republics. Withdrawals were made at all levels from the federal reserves, which in turn needed constant refilling. The resultant confusion created a yawning gap between the developed and underdeveloped republics. The northwest of the country (Slovenia and Croatia) was developing faster than the lagging south (Bosnia, Montenegro, Kosovo, South Serbia and Macedonia). The party attempted to solve this problem of polarization by applying a policy of ‘democratic centralism’, whereby the more developed republics would have to hand over their surpluses to various ‘Funds for the Underdeveloped’. Municipalities, communities, regions and provinces all over Yugoslavia joined in an unseemly rush to prove their underdeveloped status. Those on the giving end were understandably outraged by this arrangement – especially since the money they disgorged would never be reimbursed. Instead, the money received for development was swallowed up by gigantic projects hatched by ambitious local cadres.

This was most pronounced in the overpopulated and poverty-stricken republic of Kosovo. Given that Kosovo quite clearly merited the status of ‘underdeveloped republic’, the Kosovo-Albanian leaders were given money, which they invested in the infrastructure of their capital, Pristina. They built a huge oriental-style library, university buildings, a modern hospital, a cultural centre, buildings to house various political organizations and a luxury residential area for the leaders. Everything was bigger, more expensive and more ostentatious by comparison with Tirana, the capital of neighbouring Albania, the poorest country in Europe and ‘the first atheistic state in the world’. The Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha was much more concerned about building thousands of bunkers to resist ‘imperialist attacks’ than about his country’s economic prosperity.

The career of the younger Milosevic began slowly, and to start with he was heavily dependent on his old friend and guardian, Ivan Stambolic, whose own career had been promoted by a powerful cousin, Petar Stambolic, a high communist official. Petar had somehow been able to convince Tito that he was devoid of ambition; though he himself was the very

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embodiment of iron-fisted leadership, Tito never ceased to claim that nothing was more corrosive than the hunger for power.

In the early years it looked as if Milosevic was destined to be a subordinate, to listen attentively and carry out orders without hesitation, just like his predecessor Ivan. It was Ivan who patronizingly dubbed him the 'Little One'. He trusted Milosevic, supported him and generally treated him as a younger brother. He was convinced that he had never had a more loyal and compliant co-worker, or indeed a more modest one. At this juncture, greater advancement seemed unlikely; Milosevic was a 'Little Man'. His rules were simple. He was merciless to subordinates. He only kept promises made to superiors.

Milosevic eventually replaced Ivan Stambolic as vice-director and later director of 'Technogas' (1968–78), where his performance seems to have been undistinguished at best and divisive at worst. But the logic of the time dictated that his incompetence would be rewarded by promotion. For three months he was a *chef de cabinet* for Belgrade's Mayor Pesic. Pesic grumbled, 'What am I to do with Ivan's Little One? He is ignorant of everything, including his own ignorance. He's useless.' The next mayor, Zivorad Kovacevic, later ambassador to Washington in the 1980s, refused point blank to take him on.

The unwanted young executive needed to find another job. At this point his gift for backroom manoeuvring began to bear spectacular fruit: somehow he won the position of director of the Bank of Belgrade (1978–82), despite his ignorance in matters of economics and management. His inexperience was no real obstacle to promotion, since the socialist vision of economics valued above all the cadre's loyalty to the party. Any expert could be found, even one who was not a member of the party but willing to remain in the shadows, to carry out Milosevic's work for him. If the party cadre were to be promoted, the non-member expert might follow him, but only for as long as the superior member's lack of qualifications could remain unnoticed. A non-party expert, for example, could never become a minister.

Milosevic now went to the USA for several months as part of a specialization process to teach him how to conduct business. When he returned he was fairly proficient in spoken English. Overnight he seemed to have become a respectable banker, a man with potential who had finally discovered his true vocation. Next, in accordance with the socialist