

Part Two

SERBIA AND THE GREAT POWERS

*Two Interpretations of  
Serbian Nationalism*

Not all nations are equal in size, power, and efficacy. Differences among them that determine their historical importance are age-long and will certainly not change. Though this sheer truth is widely known, many Serbian leaders never recognized it. Thus our many failures and stumbling.

It is quite possible for a nation to rise to heights and shine in a specific era, only to decline and sink into a sea of mediocrity in another. Those periods are brief or long and the supremacy local or global. In the latter case, the periods become historical epochs of someone's particular rule.

Since ancient times, interference in international relations depended on one crucial point: Power.

*Whoever had more power was able to impose his interests or order of things upon others.*

In modern times, an international order was established as a way of directing world developments. The order is not based on total impartiality, despite public proclamations of universal equality. The world's biggest nations determine international directions and interests; they also define the general and mandatory rules of behavior. Small nations have a choice: either they accept these rules and seek happiness within these terms, or defy them

aware of the consequences in advance. The refusal of small nations to bow to these rules inevitably leads to national disaster.

Of course, force and threat are not the usual means of persuasion in contemporary world. There exist a rather large space that enables small nations to operate within the scope of their interests. Success depends on skill and resourcefulness. The most important skill of all is winning over Great Powers to back one's goals.

Major historical crises broke out when Great Powers clashed between themselves. Their conflicts inevitably drew small states into the tragic turmoil with the most disastrous consequences for them.

Sometimes, a Great Power would stir up small states to conflict in order to test its potential or design of another Great Power. In those situations, the Great Powers remained in the background, holding firmly onto the strings, stepping in only at the end, as the inevitable arbitrators in charge of the final verdict.

*The supremacy of the Great Powers today is perhaps more sophisticated and covert than before, but its nature is basically the same.*

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The maturity of a nation is measured by its capacity to soberly assess its strength and potentials.

Its history and experience should reasonably assist the process. Errors and fallacies from past eras should be remembered and passed on to posterity as a precious collective knowledge. Constructive and unfavorable examples of others, particularly those in one's immediate vicinity, are valuable lessons for an accurate evaluation of one's strength.

This is what wise and enduring nations do.

In measuring one's potential, it is better to err in assessment than to overrate. If a nation fails to recognize its maximum at a particular point of time, it nevertheless achieved something. However, if it seeks to overachieve, it will go empty-handed, probably stripped of what it had.

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Nations are never boastful on their own accord. Only their leaders could be boastful. In the name of the people, they determine whether a nation is strong or weak. They settle a nation's future, both autocrats and democrats. Whether they inherited power, seized power, or earned it through the will of the people, national leaders have the capacity to take their people on one course or another, explaining why that particular course was in their biggest interest.

Today, the possibility of influencing people and shaping public opinion, is greater than ever before. In Serbia, where free thought was banished long ago, this is much easier. Particularly in situations when the government has control over mass media.

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In the course of the last fifteen years, Serbia's relationship with Great Powers has been on the agenda once again.

The fact that Serbs have already experienced every stage of those relationships in the past, as a people and as a state, proved to be almost of no significance. It is as if our collective memory has faded, covered by layers of oblivion, or worse yet, with faulty and untrue substance. So we face the old questions one more time.

Where is Serbia's place in the world today? What are Serbia's real national interests? Who our true allies are and who are our irreconcilable adversaries? Are we a part of the East or the West? How do we coordinate our interests with our neighbors after the unprecedented terror, injustice and violence we have experienced during our joint history? How big should Serbia's territory be? Was Yugoslavia the best option for the Serbian nation as a whole? Is there a world conspiracy against Serbs?

Those questions could go on forever, but it will always end with the same thought on Serbia's dependence on the will of the Great Powers.

That is why we made it a topic of our discussion.

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The Great Powers in modern history are generally understood to be Great Britain, France, and Russia as the old powers, and the

United States as a new power. Germany needs to be added to that list for obvious reasons, In recent times China has earned the status of a Great Power as well. In the 19th century, it was the Habsburg Monarchy too.

The basis for this classification is historical as much as political. Apart from Germany and Austria, the countries listed here are those with a permanent seat in the U.N. Security Council.

After WWII, the term "superpower" was introduced for the United States and the Soviet Union. Along with this came the term "bipolar world". After the Soviet Union broke up, expressions were used such as "unipolarity", "the only remaining superpower", and "pax Americana" to denote the era of American supremacy in global affairs.

Modern diplomatic vocabulary prefers the term "international community" as a euphemism that conceals the will of the Great Powers.

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Two different opinions on Serbia's relations with the Great Powers emerged toward the end of the 20th century.

The first and prevalent view was based on the so called "conspiracy theory". Western powers conspired against the Serbs, preventing them from achieving their justified national goals.

The theory developed as follows.

Serbia's problems began when the Soviet Union broke up because it was a counterweight to Western interests and maintained a "balance of the powers".

The former Yugoslavia was dismantled from outside through the activities of the "foreign factor", to whom this was a primary political goal. In the implementation of its goal, the international community trampled on principles of international law, the most important being the one on the inviolability of an independent State's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The designs of the West have been known a long time. Led by the United States, the West had a strategic interest to control the Balkans and therefore decided to break up Yugoslavia and subjugate the Serbs to its will and plan.

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Russia is the only Great Power favorably inclined toward the Serbs and the only one that openly showed willingness to stand in defense of Serbian national rights. This is because Serbs are a Slavic people and belong to the Eastern Orthodox Church, remaining throughout history faithful to the Slavic and Orthodox commitments.

The Serbs gained nothing valuable from the West. On the contrary. Western influence was deeply detrimental for the Serbs, leaving many adverse consequences in the past.

The root of this belief goes back to the era of Communist enthusiasm for the Soviet Union. Only superficial arguments changed. Instead of the "first country of Communism" came the "leader of the Slavic and Orthodox world", but the essence was basically the same.

The conclusion of this view is the following.

The world is irreconcilably divided in two opposed camps and there will never be understanding and harmony between them. On one side imperialist forces headed by the United States and European Union, on the other Russia and China.

The Serbian most tragic misfortune is that they live today in an era when Russia is on its knees. Thus Serbian interests cannot be realized and the Serbs have suffered defeat. But Serbia should not lose hope, Russia will soon rise and help the Serbs at the last moment. Russia must be trusted, because it is the only reliable support for the Serbian nationalist policy.

Finally a value judgment: Whoever goes to Russian diplomatic mission for counsel is a patriot, and those who seek counsel from Americans are outright traitors. Complying with Russia is considered patriotic, but complying with the West is an act of highest treason.

China will not be quiet forever, either. It will cry out sooner or later and offer a strong hand of support and salvation.

This view is obviously based on regret for the global unity of all Communists and their parties. Serbia and Serbs should be scapegoats for this biggest of all goals of humanity.

At the same time, this outlook was the fundamental ingredient of the ideology of Serbo-Communism (political agenda carried out by Slobodan Milosevic).

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The second view seems quite at odds with the previous one.

It departs from the situation at present. Serbia's future is in the so-called "Euro-Atlantic integrations"<sup>1</sup> and this goal is of paramount importance, while everything else is far below in significance.

The main obstacle for this to happen have been the Serbs themselves, their history and mental attitude. Serbs are a backward nation who never proceeded on the course of "social maturing".

Serbia never stood on the path of "modernization process" and remained, to this day, in claws of isolation and primitivism. There was hardly anything valuable in Serbia's past. Incapable of joining modern "civilization", Serbia must feel the adverse effects of its centuries-long faults "by necessity of historical development".

Modernizers and precursors (i.e. leftists) were never properly understood in Serbia, much less accepted. They would depart their business unfinished, not because their ideas were not realistic, but because Serbs are historically ill-prepared for so-called "reforms" that should transform Serbia from a state of collective nationalism into a "modern society".

The major obstacle that keeps on preventing Serbia from reforming itself is a specific kind of national collectivism. An aspiration to rule over other nations and achieve predominance with the use of arms -- that is the Serbs' main national trait.

According to this theory, the first condition for Serbian progress is to renounce its history and customs and give up the policy it has conducted over the past 200 years. It is not the last half of the 20th century under Communism that was responsible for the present state of Serbian national consciousness, but rather centuries of living under the Ottoman rule.

This view rests strongly on Titoism. It recognizes in it, despite all its formal flaws, the seed of modern political values in Yugo-

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<sup>1</sup> Refers to European Union and NATO.

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slav variant of socialism, comparable, in some elements, even to the kind existing in certain countries of Europe today.

Backward Serbian nationalism was impeding this positive historical process. If not, the doors of an illustrious future would be open for former Yugoslavia.

Consequently, the Serbs were required to free themselves from their wretched heritage, admit their errors and, thus "cleansed", line up for "Euro-Atlantic integrations".

Titoism bears no responsibility whatsoever. If nothing else, it stopped "brotherly bloodshed" between the Yugoslav peoples and secured 50 years of peace and cooperation in Yugoslavia under the parole of "brotherhood and unity". Furthermore, it opened Yugoslavia to the world, through membership in the Non-Aligned Movement.

Defenders of this opinion associated modernization with the views of the Left. The well-known Communist separation between "progress" and "regress", between the "progressive" and "reactionary", said a little differently.

The major problem with this line of reasoning is the simple fact that the leftist movement in Serbia was very weak prior to the Communist takeover. Although socialist ideas broke through to Serbia timidly, they remained on the fringes of Serbia's political scene.

The adherents of this particular doctrine, the "globalists" or 'mondialists' as they prefer to be labeled, have scarcely advanced from their Titoist origins. There is little democracy in them and not much true understanding of progress. For some reason, though, they tent to attract Western sympathies.

They are bothered by Serbs and their history mostly because Serbs refused to accept Marxism-Leninism thoroughly enough, specifically the Yugoslav version of it.

Undoubtedly, this view originates from the ideology of Tito's Communism.

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Although seeming contradictory, the two concepts derive from the same mental scope. In the mid-1960s, Communists in

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Serbia got divided and as a result the two opposing views (Titoist and Serbo-Communist) started to develop.

By the 1990s, their respective developments were over and they became the bitterest of rivals.

There was never a third alternative. Serbia's options boiled down to two branches of domestic Communism and the dangers of authoritarianism lurked in both.

It would be fair to say that there was a grain of truth in both of them, as in every destructive idea. Yet, facts were selected and explanations adjusted to create the impression of the whole truth.

Both views relied on emotion, not reason. One hit on sensitive national sentiments, the other on the crave for material prosperity. The former offered comfort for every decent Serb, drowning individual dissatisfaction in the conspiracy theory by which the Serbs were destined for ruin. The second was a cheap scheme: "Give yourselves up and you'll live in the paradise on earth".



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### *Policy of Great Powers Toward Serbia*

This part will address major historical facts in connection with Serbia's relations with the Great Powers over the past two centuries. It will provide a necessary foundation for any consideration of the foreign position of Serbia and the Serbs in the past.

Today, more than ever before it seems, a historical examination of this kind is particularly valuable in developing one's international policy.

The precondition for this has to be an analysis of Serbia's complex and partly contradictory relations with the Great Powers relieved of prejudice. A debate subject to a biased view of Serbia's diplomatic history would be particularly dangerous.

*The image in an embellished mirror, no matter how appealing, invariably contains a speck to future failure.*

## 1

Russia played the most important role of all the Great Powers in modern Serbian history. Unlike others whose influence grew stronger or weaker in different periods, Russia remained throughout a key factor in Serbian (and Yugoslav) national policy.

Maybe this was primarily because of the Russia's Slavic and Orthodox nature. Or, it may also be that the strategic plans impacted Russia's decision to deal with the Serbian question.

Most likely both factors worked side by side.

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There was an intellectual movement in Russia which maintained that it was Russia's foremost duty to lead and protect the entire Slavic and Orthodox community and that Serbs of all Slavs and Orthodox Christians were the closest to Russians. The

movement developed in the mid-19 century and was known as the Slavophile Movement.

Reputable historians made a strong point about Russia's vital interest in the Balkans as a hinterland of the Bosphorus<sup>2</sup>, enabling access to the Mediterranean Sea. In spite of Russia's immense size, spread out across two continents, the country did not control a single strategic port in Europe. Exit from the Baltic Sea was controlled at Copenhagen and exit from the Black Sea at Istanbul. Clearly the latter was far more interesting in Russia's foreign policy. The Mediterranean was a central place in the plans of the Great Powers. Thus Russian influence in the Balkans had particular weight.

In the First Serbian Insurrection (1804-1813), Russia lend strong diplomatic support to Karadjordje and his military leaders. At the outset of the uprising in 1804, a delegation was sent to Saint Petersburg<sup>3</sup> with a mission to win over Russia for the Serbian cause. It returned with firm guarantees and some financial aid.

Russia and Turkey had been intermittently at war from 1807 to 1812. In 1807, Russia called Serbian insurgents to join the campaign against the Ottoman Empire. Karadjordje and his army were only too glad to oblige. Having faith in Russia's good intentions, they refused the so-called Icko's Peace<sup>4</sup>, a proposal from Turkey implying the fulfillment of nearly all of Serbia's demands.

Peace between Saint Petersburg and Istanbul was signed in Bucharest in 1812<sup>5</sup>. The agreement mentioned Serbia's autonomy

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<sup>2</sup> The strait between the Black and Aegean Seas separates Europe from Asia as well as dividing Istanbul (Constantinople) into two parts.

<sup>3</sup> Petrograd or St. Petersburg, known as Leningrad during the Soviet government.

<sup>4</sup> Petar Icko was from Aegean Macedonia and was authorized by Serbia to negotiate with the Porte. Talks with Istanbul proceeded over the latter half of 1806, when Turkish authorities accepted his conditions. The Serbs rejected Icko's Peace in January 1807 and resumed the armed revolt. Icko died in Belgrade in 1808.

<sup>5</sup> Article 8 of the peace treaty proposed self-government for Serbia but gave no firm guarantees. Later on Prince Milos Obrenovic persistently cited this point

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symbolically, without firm guarantees. The conflict with Napoleon prevailed in Russia's assessment of the war, and making peace with the Ottomans was part of that plan. At that point, the question of Serbia and its interests meant little to Russia.

Konstantin Konstantinovich Rodofinikin, a senior diplomat from Saint Petersburg of Greek background, visited the Serbian insurgents in the capacity of a special advisor between 1807 and 1809 (recalled in 1810). He was the architect of the first effort at drafting a constitution that would define the jurisdictions and area of Karadjordje's government as supreme leader and his chiefs. Rodofinikin's efforts did not help smooth over differences between the warring Serbian chieftains. It is more likely that they contributed to deepening them.

The First Insurrection failed in 1813, Serbia falling under a new period of Turkish rule. It would not be amiss to conclude that Russia's indifference was one of the main reasons for Serbia's defeat. Or worse yet: that Russia left Serbia high and dry when it signed the Treaty of Bucharest.

Despite the unfavorable experiences, imperial Russia continued to act as the only Great Power defending Serbia's interests. The Akerman<sup>6</sup> convention of 1826 was an ultimatum by Russia's young Emperor Nicholas I to the Porte, insisting that Turkey must respect point 8 of the Bucharest accord.

The peace treaty signed in Edirne<sup>7</sup>, again between Russia and Turkey following a brief war in 1928-29, introduced a statement that declared Serbia an autonomous Principality in 1830.

Russia energetically protested Serbian Constitution passed in 1835, demanding that it be repealed over liberal provisions that were not in keeping with the autocratic spirit of government in Russia.

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of the Bucharest peace treaty in his diplomatic efforts to secure Serbia the status of an autonomous principality.

<sup>6</sup> Talks conducted in the town of Akerman where Dniestar River flows into the Black Sea, signed in September 1826.

<sup>7</sup> City in European Turkey. Very important traffic and strategic point with strong fortification. Peace was concluded after the Russian army conquered Edirne in 1828.

In an effort to relax the pressure from Russia, Serbian Prince Milos Obrenovic heeded British counsel, while Defenders of the Constitution and Prince Alexander Karadjordjevic, whose first option Russia had rejected, relied on the recommendations from Polish emigrants<sup>8</sup>. Both attempts yielded only partial results.

This continued until the Crimean War and peace in Paris (1856). The war between allied European forces and Russia was probably the latter's most painful defeat in modern history. Serbia declared neutrality and was assured autonomy from all members of the winning coalition<sup>9</sup>, that is, from signatories to the Paris peace accord. Serbia was free from Russian tutelage for the first time. Up to a point, though.

Russia again came to Serbia's aid in the war with Turkey in 1876 though it originally opposed the war. Gen. Mikhail Grigorievich Chernyayev arrived in Serbia and was appointed commander of the Serbian army. Russian troops included a considerable number of volunteers, members of the Slavenophile Movement<sup>10</sup>. Alas, the war ended with Serbia's defeat the same year. The following year Russia went to war with Turkey, insisting that Serbia join in, which the Serbian government sought to avoid at all costs, terrified of its recent fiasco. Facing a Russian ultimatum, Serbia joined the war against Turkey, but not before December 1877.

The Russian-Turkish war ended with the Treaty of San Stefano a few months later.

This treaty was concluded in the suburbs of Istanbul (San Stefano) in March 1878. It was an isolated attempt by Russia to address the "Eastern question"<sup>11</sup> alone, following its own interests.

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<sup>8</sup> The leader among them was Adam Czartorisky. His envoy in Serbia was Frantisek-Franjo Zach, and together with Ilija Garasanin (Serbian statesman), he wrote the Nacertanija, a Serbian national program (1844). An employee of the French government.

<sup>9</sup> Great Britain, France, Austria, Prussia, Sardinia, and Turkey. Referred to as "powers-guarantors " in Serbian historiography.

<sup>10</sup> There were around 3,000 Russian soldiers in Serbia, 700 of them officers.

<sup>11</sup> The "Eastern question" in the 19th century meant resolving the political future of European Turkey, that is, present day Balkans.

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The treaty recognized state independence for Serbia and Montenegro and made minor border changes of both countries toward Turkey. The essential point of the treaty and Russia's foremost achievement was the creation of the so-called "Greater Bulgaria". Bulgaria was envisaged as an autonomous Principality with a Christian Prince, spread out over the center of the Balkan peninsula. From Edirne in the East, down to Cavalla and the vicinity of Thessaloniki in the South, northward through Kumanovo and Vranje to Tetovo and Ohrid in the West. Under the Treaty of San Stefano, Bulgaria would encompass Bulgaria, Eastern Rumelia, all of geographical Macedonia, the Albanian mountains, and serve as an extended arm of Russian policy in Southeastern Europe<sup>12</sup>. The towns liberated by the Serbian army were annexed to Bulgaria, including the town of Nis and its entire district<sup>13</sup>.

A message from Prince Milan Obrenovic to Russians speaks volumes about relations between Serbia and Russia at the time:

"The Serbian army will not yield even if attacked by the Russians. We know in advance that the outcome of such a conflict would not be favorable for us, but the world will see a performance unusual in relations between allies".

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<sup>12</sup> Russia's solution from San Stefano was short-lived. European powers dissatisfied with the proposal called a conference in Berlin in July 1878, presided over by Otto von Bismarck, and the provisions of the Treaty of San Stefano were redefined: Serbia and Montenegro received international recognition, Greater Bulgaria was divided into the autonomous Principality of Bulgaria, Eastern Rumelia, and Macedonia remained under Turkish administration. The Habsburg Monarchy was given a mandate to occupy Bosnia-Herzegovina and to establish military rule over the Sandzak of Novi Pazar.

Serbia acquired territories in the south -- the cities of Nis, Pirot, and Vranje. On this occasion, a statement from the Russian Foreign Ministry was delivered to Serbia's representative at the Berlin Congress:

"Russian interests come first, then Bulgarian, and Serbian after them, though sometimes Bulgarian interests are equal to Russian interests."

<sup>13</sup> Russian negotiator Count Ignatyev believed that Vidin and Nis should be "strong border points" for defense of the future Bulgarian capital Sofia.

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Two of three political parties founded in Serbia early in the 1880s were regarded as pro-Russian. Liberals and Radicals<sup>14</sup> believed that reliance on Russia was the best way to achieve Serbia's national goals. The goals went similar to the aspirations of other European nations of the time: national liberation and unification<sup>15</sup>.

While the Liberals were truly Russophile in every respect, the National Radical Party turned to Russia only in its foreign policy. In every other aspect, the Radicals were under strong West European influences (Constitutionalism, parliamentarism, democratic liberties, local self-government, secular education, etc.)

Russia was active again in the so called Annexation crisis in 1908-09. Vienna's official decision to annex Bosnia-Herzegovina nearly led Serbia to declare war on Austria-Hungary. The Serbian government was in an awkward position, with growing pressure at home for a war and realistic assessments that Serbia was not ready for it without Russia by its side. At a crucial moment, the Serbian government finally realized that it could not count on Russia so any effort to oppose the annexation was futile.

A Balkan Alliance was formed in 1912 between Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Montenegro, for the purpose of addressing the Eastern Question together and of driving Turkey out of Europe. The Alliance was shaped with Russian mediation and in line with Russian interests in the Balkans.

In the First Balkan War (1912), Russia accepted Austria's demand that Montenegro gives up Skoder and Serbia access to

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<sup>14</sup> Svetozar Markovic (1846-1875) was the precursor of Socialist and Radical ideas in Serbia; he was a supporter of Russian political thinkers Lavrov, Dobrolyubov, and Chernishevski. He was particularly fervent about the Russian people's movement during his studies in Saint Petersburg. Later in Zurich he associated with Mikhail Bakunin, Russian émigré and founder of anarchism, along with other Serbian students (Nikola Pasic and others). In his final years, he was under strong influence from West European socialists.

<sup>15</sup> Italians and Germans were at the head of this process. Italian national unification took place in 1870, German in 1871.

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the Adriatic Sea from northern Albania. Both concessions were made for the benefit of the newly created state of Albania<sup>16</sup>.

After the June 1914 assassination in Sarajevo and an ultimatum from Austria, Saint Petersburg advised Belgrade to draft a conciliatory response to avoid armed conflict. When this failed and Austria attacked Serbia, the Russian Emperor Nicholas II decided at last to join the war.

Russian diplomacy gave aid to Serbia during the most crucial times in WWI, until the fall of the monarchy (in February) and Bolshevik victory (in November) 1917. Thanks to Russia's energetic intervention, Western forces sent a fleet to receive Serbian troops on the coasts of the Ionic Sea, following its retreat across Albania in 1915.

The Russian Emperor and government were not enthusiastic about the Yugoslav unification, worried about the possibility of Russia's influence decreasing after an association of Orthodox Serbs with Catholic Croats and Slovenes<sup>17</sup>. The democratic government under Kerensky had more understanding for the Yugoslav idea<sup>18</sup>. Even Nikola Pasic's (Serbian Prime Minister) high reputation in Russian political circles could not convince the Imperial government that Serbia's pro-Yugoslav policy was the correct move.

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<sup>16</sup> The First Balkan War ended with peace in London (May 1913). On one side were the winning forces of Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Greece, and on the other defeated Turkey. Serbia restored its medieval territory of Kosovo and Metohija (Old Serbia) and Vardar Macedonia (southern Serbia).

After losing territories awarded in northern Albania through intervention from Great Powers, Serbia demanded of Bulgaria compensation in Macedonia. A dispute broke out between Serbia and Bulgaria, requiring arbitration by the Russian Emperor, under the letter of the Balkan Alliance. Bulgaria refused to acknowledge the decision and attacked Serbia late in June 1913, without declaring war. Thus began the Second Balkan War, which ended with Bulgaria's defeat in 1913.

<sup>17</sup> Speaking on the prospect of Yugoslav unification, Russian Emperor Nicholas II said it would be "adding water to wine".

<sup>18</sup> The Corfu Declaration between the Serbian government and the Yugoslav Committee that paved the way to unification was adopted in July 1917.

The Communist revolution in Russia brought on changes in every sphere, including its foreign policy toward Serbia and the Balkans.

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes did not establish diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union until 1940<sup>19</sup>, but it gave shelter to many Russian refugees, enemies of the Soviets and émigrés<sup>20</sup>.

The Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) was founded in Vukovar (Slavonia) in 1920. Since inception, the party operated as an outpost of the Soviet Union, working on a Bolshevik revolution in Yugoslavia and unification with "the first country of socialism". Relations were no longer between the states, national or cultural. They became solely relations along the "Party lines".

The Comintern<sup>21</sup> had the crucial say in the policy of the KPJ, throughout its operations until 1948. Particularly between the two wars<sup>22</sup>.

On orders from the Comintern, Josip Broz Tito was sent to Yugoslavia in 1937 to renew the work of the KPJ. Tito had spent several years in the Soviet Union as a reliable worker for the Party.

Communists in Yugoslavia supported the Non-Aggression Pact between Germany and the Soviet Union in August 1939. To them, the start of WWII was a conflict between rival imperial bourgeoisies. The decision to stir up a revolution in Yugoslavia

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<sup>19</sup> The first Ambassador of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in Moscow was Milan Gavrilovic.

<sup>20</sup> Gen. Petar Nikolayevich Vrangel, the famous commander of the voluntary anti-Soviet army, the so-called White Guard Army, was buried as he wished, in the Russian Orthodox Church at Tasmajdan Park in Belgrade in 1928, where his grave lies today.

<sup>21</sup> The Comintern was an international organization of communist parties set up in Moscow in 1919. It was a political means whereby the Bolsheviks founded, operated, and controlled communist movements all around the world.

<sup>22</sup> Filip Filipovic, Sima Markovic, Milan Gorkic, the Vujovic brothers and many other members of the KPJ ended up dead or in Soviet camps, as renegades of the Party.



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came after the agreement fell through with Hitler's attack on Russia 22 June 1941<sup>23</sup>.

Their important thing was to aid the "brotherly Soviet Union" and stir up a "proletarian revolution" in Yugoslavia, on the 1917 Russian model.

*It was decided by the Anti-Hitlerian coalition in Tehran, November 1943 and Yalta 1945, that Yugoslavia was to become a Soviet sphere of interest after the war.*

This sealed the fate of postwar Yugoslavia and ensured the victory of the KPJ and the Communist revolution.

Tito was in Moscow early in fall 1944, and returned to Belgrade only after the Red Army marched into Serbia and liberated its capital in October that year.

From 1945-1948, Yugoslavia was structured as a carbon copy of the Soviet system. The first Constitution of the FNRJ<sup>24</sup> passed by Communists in 1946 was a replica of Stalin's 1936 Constitution.

During those years, most of the military and civilian advisors of the Yugoslav Communist authorities were Soviet "experts". Many Yugoslav Communist officials and army officers went to the Soviet Union for an "education" and for "training".

The KPJ was a very active member of the Cominform, a new Stalinist organization of Communist parties.

Tito and Stalin split in June 1948 and all ties were severed with Moscow. Several thousand Yugoslav Communists who publicly expressed their loyalty to the Soviet Union were interned in the Goli Otok concentration camp.

Reconciliation came two years after Stalin's death (1953), when the "process of destalinization" began and "Stalin's person-

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<sup>23</sup> The so called "First Proletarian Brigade" (unit of Tito's partisans) was set up in Rudo in Eastern Bosnia, on 21 December 1941, on Stalin's birthday. After the break with Russia in 1948, this date, celebrated as the Yugoslav People's Army Day, was moved to 22 December, for obvious reasons. The unit's insignia was a five-pointed red star with a hammer and sickle in the middle. All other partisan units had just the red star and a red flag with the slogan: "Proletariats of the world, unite!" They never recognized or used any Yugoslav symbols, not the coat of arms nor the flag, throughout the war.

<sup>24</sup> Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia.

ality cult was dismantled" (1955). The new Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev flew to Belgrade, embraced Tito and ironed out differences between the two sisterly parties KPJ and SKP(b).<sup>25</sup>

Until it broke up, the SFRJ's<sup>26</sup> foreign policy held the place and role of Soviet Russia, its ideological views and interests, in the highest regard. The Soviet Union remained Serbia's most important economic partner until the end of the 20th century.

Serbian Communists led by Milosevic stubbornly believed that Russia would lend firm support and aid, but they were repeatedly disappointed. During the Yugoslav crisis Russia appeared as an important factor supporting the policy of Western powers at every crucial moment. It happened again at the very end, when Russia's Foreign Minister personally told Milosevic that he and his government were over and done with for good.

It seems that Vojislav Kostunica is about to commit precisely the same mistake as Milosevic with regard to Russia's role in Balkan affairs (fall 2006).

## 2

No European nation influenced other nations with such intensity of its political ideas as the French.

Starting from the French Revolution, France was a seedbed of liberal and democratic thought all over the world. Its impact in Serbia in that respect was without equal.

Relations between Serbia and France over the past 200 years went along two tracks. One of political relations between the two countries, and the other of French ideas and intellectual influence on Serbian politics, science, and culture. Both were immensely important for the Serbs, the most crucial some believe, in the latter part of the 19th and first half of the 20th century.

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<sup>25</sup> SKJ -- Alliance of Communists of Yugoslavia. SKP(b) -- Pan-Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). The acronym KPSS was used as well -- Communist Party of Soviet Union.

<sup>26</sup> Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

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It is not widely known that Serbian insurgents made first contact with France as early as 1807. In a battle in Eastern Bosnia, Serbian local commander captured about 10 French soldiers and two French cannons. They were sent from a French garrison in Dubrovnik to help the Turks<sup>27</sup>.

In search of allies and patrons, the Serbian military leadership sent an envoy to Paris<sup>28</sup> in 1809 with a proposal to Napoleon to set up a French protectorate in Serbia.

France's political position in Europe visibly weakened following Napoleon's final defeat in 1815. Consequently, its role in the Balkans was not of much significance over the next 40 years. Still, this did not mean that the presence of the French factor was not felt at all in southeastern Europe<sup>29</sup>.

The French Foreign Minister de Broglie was the first European politician who publicly advocated the principle of self-determination for Balkan peoples "in bondage", rejecting proposals for partitioning the Balkans among the Great Powers in the event of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire<sup>30</sup>.

Serbia's first Constitution, drafted in 1835, is known as the "Sretenje Constitution". Its author incorporated many democratic provisions from France's constitutional tradition. Thus conservative empires (Austria, Russia, and Turkey) united in disapproving of the Constitution, fearing that France's revolutionary spirit in Serbia was a dangerous disease and might infect other Balkan nations. Together with strong opposition from Prince Milos Obrenovic, this was the main reason why the Constitution was short-lived.

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<sup>27</sup> At the time, Dubrovnik was the seat of Napoleon's "Illyrian provinces" in Dalmatia and Boka. At the request of Hassan Pasha, Commander Marmon sent 3,500 troops with 72 engineer officers and 12 guns, in spite of appeals from Serbia not to do so.

<sup>28</sup> Rade Vucinic-Karlovcin. His mission failed because of Napoleon's considerations for the Porte and Vienna. In a conversation with Austria's Foreign Minister Metternich in 1810, Napoleon proposed that Austria occupy Serbia, in a bid to win Vienna to his side. Vucinic was nevertheless kept in Paris until 1814, at the expense of the French government.

<sup>29</sup> France opened its first Consulate in Serbia in 1838.

<sup>30</sup> Speaking before the National Assembly in 1833.

Polish political emigrants who were headed by Adam Czartoryski had the main say in Serbia's national policy and were actually agents of the French government when the Constitution was being defended. Due to that fact, actions of the Serbian government were under indirect French supervision.

Under Napoleon III (1848-1871), France's policy became stronger in Serbia during the reign of Alexander Karadjordjevic and the subsequent governments of Milos and Mihailo Obrenovic. A French officer, Major Hyppolite Monden stayed in Serbia from 1861 to 1865, first as a senior officer, then as Minister of the Army.

After the fall of Napoleon III and defeat in the war against Prussia (1870-1871), France's political influence on Balkan developments ceased almost completely. The only visible presence was the role of the French financial capital in the construction of a railroad through Serbia and armament loans to the Serbian government. The "Tariff War" between Serbia and Austria (1905-1911) forced Serbia to look for new markets and new sources of money, thus France returned into the picture. A Franco-Serbian Bank was established in 1910 which enabled substantial financial transactions between Paris and Belgrade.

France was moderately supportive in all of Serbia's crises between 1903 and 1914.

In WWI, Serbia and its army received the biggest aid from France. Ammunition was urgently sent for the Serbian artillery during the crucial battle during the fall of 1914, even though it was the wrong caliber and had to be remanufactured at the arms factory in the town of Kragujevac in central Serbia. France carried the heaviest weight in rescuing and transporting Serbian soldiers and civilians from the Albanian coast to the Greek island of Corfu. Thousands of refugee Serbian students were warmly welcomed in French schools all over France during and after the war.

Three allied commanders were on the Salonika Front and all three were French generals<sup>31</sup>. The foreign policy conducted by

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<sup>31</sup> Generals Sarrail, Guillomat and Franchet D'Esperay. The Serbian Supreme Command was not on good terms with the first two and had a serious fallout

## SERBIA IN OUR TIMES

the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was largely Franco-phile until the death of King Alexander0 Karadjordjevic. The *Petite Antante* (alliance of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Romania) was formed under the auspices of France in 1921.

Yugoslavia and France concluded an agreement on mutual friendship in 1927, which was extended to another five years in 1932.

King Alexander Karadjordjevic was assassinated in Marseilles on 9 October 1934 whilst on an official visit to France. The then French Foreign Minister, Louis Barthou, was shot to death too, and Gen. George was seriously wounded. The assassination was carried out by members of the Ustashi terrorist organization.

After the tragedy, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia made a sharp turn toward Italy and Germany, completely neglecting its ties with France. Paris, under pressure from problems of its own, distanced itself from southeastern Europe.

The Communist victory in Yugoslavia further dissociated the Serbian and French nations<sup>32</sup>. France was the least inclined to Tito and his new government and granted shelter to many Serbian political émigrés. Gen. De Gaulle would not forgive Tito for the execution of Gen. Mihailovic and persecution of his soldiers. This is why he never visited Yugoslavia and never invited Tito to Paris. Charles De Gaulle was exceptional in every respect including his consistency as a statesman.

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with them, but the third proved to be a true friend of Serbia. He was subsequently conferred with an honorary highest rank of the Serbian army and awarded the highest Serbian war decorations.

<sup>32</sup> From the 1960s, a large number of craftsmen and workers from Serbia sought work in France. Many of them settled there permanently and became French citizens.

A number of talented artists from Belgrade tried their luck in Paris after WWII, but only a few earned a high reputation in its art circles.

Some of Belgrade's "tough guys" (i.e. delinquents) made it to high circles in France during the 1960s and 1970s and some of them paid a high price to reach the top.

## Milan St. Protic

\* \* \*

Students from Serbia started attending French schools in the mid-19th century, and many generations followed.

Thanks to local "Parisians", Serbia emerged from centuries of neglect and took large steps toward its European model.

The biggest wave of Serbian students in France came after World War One. Upon their return, many of them assumed leading positions in public and private sectors.

French political, educational and cultural institutions were used as role models for the development of institutions in Serbia.

From the 1850s, French gradually took precedence over German, becoming the most widely spoken foreign language in Serbia.

Fiction as well as professional literature was translated most widely from French.

The liberal constitutions of the Kingdom of Serbia of 1888 and 1903 contained many provisions and formulations from France's constitutional documents.

The 1881 legislation on the press -- one of the most liberal legal documents of the time -- was highly indebted to the French model of freedom of the press.

The Serbian Royal Academy was also defined on the basis of the *Academie francaise*.

Belgrade University (1905) was established on the model of the University of Paris (*La Sorbonne*).

Serbian architecture, particularly between the two world wars, resembled French architecture in many ways. Many buildings in central Belgrade are a vivid testament to this influence.

A tribute of gratitude to France stands in Belgrade's Kalemegdan Park with the inscription "*a la France*" -- a memory in steel to times past, when the best that Serbia had came from France.

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Most Serbs were very disappointed with France's attitude during the crisis in former Yugoslavia, its breakup and the wars of the 1990s. They expected France to rush to Serbia's aid on behalf

## SERBIA IN OUR TIMES

of old ties, friendship and closeness. Of course, this did not happen.

Why?

Had France forgotten its friendship with Serbia and took the side of its opponents? Did pragmatic political interest prevail over historical ties with the Serbs? Did the French turn to fellow Catholics in Croatia and Slovenia, betraying Serbs because of that? Or, perhaps, France's policy to favor Bosnian Muslims was the result of the large Islamic community in France?

These questions were raised in Serbia at the time, but few people could give the right answers.

Let us disregard Milosevic's wrong and reproachful policy for a moment and deal with the relationship of the Serbs and the French. We will arrive at a few simple facts.

*The truth is that there is no friendship among nations, only among individuals.*

At one time, many Serbs had many French friends. It was from these personal ties that an understanding developed between the two nations and their countries.

But that was long time ago.

These Serbs and these Frenchmen are long deceased. Since then, France took one course, Serbia another. Today, apart from an occasional admirer of France, the spirit of France has vanished from Serbia. Today Serbs seldom speak French and they know little about its contemporary deliberations. Serbia is no longer a true lover of the greatness of French history, literature and art.

Once close, the Serbs and French have become total strangers.

### 3

If there had been any Great Power that waged its policy toward Serbia from the shadows, it was Great Britain.

*Almost never overt and transparent, Britain's role in controlling Serbian destiny was nevertheless crucial.*

The United Kingdom opened its Consulate in Serbia in 1837 and appointed Col. Hodges Consul. This paved the way for diplomatic and other ties between Britain and Serbia.

The British envoy immediately established very close relationship with Prince Milos Obrenovic and became his chief political advisor. Milos was looking for support in England, in an effort to ease pressure from Turkey.

After Milos abdicated in 1839, the British envoy temporarily retired. The Consulate reopened in 1842.

Britain's foreign policy had long been to Turkey's advantage. For British interests in the Mediterranean and Middle East, a decrepit Ottoman state was better than the creation of Russia-serving independent nations in the Balkans. Thus London was never supportive of the national movements in southeast Europe, particularly in Serbia.

Prince Mihailo Obrenovic tried in vain to win the sentiments of London for Serbia's interests. As part of that effort, he sent his wife and his friend on a diplomatic mission in 1863, followed by Liberal Vladimir Jovanovic. They published a few leaflets and articles in the newspapers on the Serbian question as part of their activities, but this did not help change Britain's attitude<sup>33</sup>.

These commendable labors received negligible attention in London. There was no favorable response but for one debate in the House of Commons. Britain was pursuing its Turkophile policy.

This continued until the beginning of the Bosnian crisis in 1875. The change took place thanks to a political action by British Liberal leader William Gladstone<sup>34</sup>. On reports of atrocities in Bulgaria and Bosnia, British public opinion finally turned against Turkey, though in favor of Bulgaria rather than Serbia.

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<sup>33</sup> Vladimir Jovanovic published two brochures: "The Servian Nation and the Eastern Question" and "The Christians in Turkey", both published in 1863.

<sup>34</sup> Gladstone wrote his famous discourse in 1876, entitled "The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East" in which he argued that the Eastern Question can be justly settled only by dividing European Turkey among the Balkan Christians.



## SERBIA IN OUR TIMES

Disappointed in Austria and Russia, King Alexander Obrenovic (1889-1903) turned to England toward the end of his reign. He established close association with the British envoy in Belgrade.

Britain's conduct toward Serbia took another turn after the May revolt in 1903 and the dynastic change. London suspended diplomatic relations with Belgrade, demanding that the conspiring officers be discharged from military service. The suspension lasted for three years and was the cause of much political turmoil. Ties were renewed in summer 1906 after the conspiracy question was solved through the retirement of the senior conspirators.

The conclusion of a trilateral agreement in early 1900s (Great Britain, France, Russia) had London partly amending its attitude toward Serbia, extending mild support and boosting its financial presence.

During WWI, aid from Britain constituted mostly of material and medical supplies. In the political sense, however, London was very much a disappointment to Serbia.

First, in 1914 and 1915, Serbia was asked to make territorial concessions to Bulgaria in return for Bulgaria to join the Entente.

Second, secret negotiations were under way with Italy (London Pact of 1915<sup>35</sup>) behind Serbia's back and its government unaware, offering Rome territorial concessions at the expense of Serbian interests.

English troops had a part in the formation and breakthrough of the Salonika Front (1916-1918), but the delay caused by Britain's unsuccessful expedition at Gallipoli was almost fatal for Serbia.

Finally, the United Kingdom was opposed to the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy until the very last.

Between the two wars, Great Britain did not take much interest in events in Yugoslavia. Its interest rapidly increased after the assassination of King Alexander, when the Regency of Prince Paul Karadjordjevic was established in 1934.

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<sup>35</sup> Concluded between England, France, and Russia on one side, and Italy on the other. Kept secret until the end of the war.

The military coup on 27 March 1941 came as the result of long preparations with active the involvement of a network of British agents and spies. They persuaded a group of Yugoslav officers and a few Belgrade politicians to support the interests of the United Kingdom, the only European power at the time still resisting Hitler.

An angry response came from Hitler. Yugoslavia was bombed on 6 April 1941 and forced to capitulate after 11 days. The Axis powers and their Balkan satellites made a grab for the territory, dividing it up.

The new Yugoslav government and young King Peter II Karadjordjevic took shelter in London.

In spring 1943, Churchill decided that the Allies begin sending military aid to Tito's Communists while gradually withdrawing support to the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland, led by Gen. Mihailovic<sup>36</sup>. In keeping with his new course, Churchill sent his first envoy, Cap. William Deakin, to Tito's Supreme Headquarters in May 1943. Soon after, a Conservative Member of the British Parliament visited Tito, Fitzroy Maclean<sup>37</sup> (September 1943).

For a time Churchill's son Randolph enjoyed the hospitality of the Yugoslav Communists as well.

*At the Tehran Conference (November 1943), it was the British Prime Minister who raised the question of aiding Tito and the partisans and insisted with the two other leaders (Stalin and Roosevelt) that the decision be made right away.*

During the winter of 1943-44, Churchill and Tito developed a lively correspondence, preparing the field for their joint plan. They met for the first time and spoke *tete-a-tete* in Naples, on 12 and 13 August 1944.

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<sup>36</sup> The first delegation of the partisan Supreme Headquarters arrived in London, also in May 1943.

<sup>37</sup> Here is an unconfirmed, but quite revealing anecdote on talks between Churchill and Maclean when the latter returned from Tito's headquarters:

Maclean: "Mr. Prime Minister I don't quite understand your policy toward Yugoslavia. Are you aware of the fact that Communism will win in Yugoslavia thanks to your help, and that it would become a tool in Stalin's hands?"

Churchill: "Mr. Maclean, let me answer with another question. Do you plan on settling in Yugoslavia after the war?"

## SERBIA IN OUR TIMES

Somewhat before that, at the insistence of the Britons, Tito and Ivan Subasic (Yugoslav Prime Minister of the government-in-exile) came to an agreement which enabled the Communists to "legally" take over power in Yugoslavia (June, 1944).

In February 1945, British Field Marshal Harold Alexander arrived for talks with Tito and his associates, after which a joint statement was issued.

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British intellectual influence on Serbia was mostly in constitutional and political theory. The 1888 and 1903 democratic constitutions owed much to Britain's understanding of parliamentarism. Learning from English teachers<sup>38</sup>, Serbian Constitution writers drew from not only the Island's political philosophy, but from the way it was implemented in Britain.

This referred first to the interdependence of the three major constitutional factors: the Crown, the Parliament and the Council of Ministers as well as the principle that Parliament is the supreme legislative body, that government derives from parliamentary majority<sup>39</sup> and that the role of the monarch is advisory and based on a respect for morals.

After 1903, the Serbian political life resembled a British two-party system with only two influential parties vying for political power (National Radical and Independent Radical).

As opposed to the Island's tradition of majority election for Parliament, the continental principle of proportional representation was used in Serbia from the start.

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Perhaps it is worth noting that during crucial events during the breakup of Yugoslavia, key roles were given to Britons: Lord PETER CARRINGTON (Chairman of The Hague Conference in 1991), Lord DAVID OWEN (international negotiator for Bosnia-Herzegovina 1992-1995), Jamie SHEA (NATO spokesman during

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<sup>38</sup> Walter Bagehot was cited most frequently among English theoreticians.

<sup>39</sup> Bagehot's famous phrase: "The Cabinet is born, lives and dies with parliamentary majority".

the air strikes in 1999), Paddy Ashdown (High Representative in Bosnia-Herzegovina 2004-2005).

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Unlike some other world powers, Britain was never Serbia's overt adversary. In fact, it most often posed as an ally and officially was so in both world wars in the 20th century.

*In spite of this, Britons for a long time perceive the Serbs as an obstinate and disobedient nation that refuses to heed advice from anyone but the Russians, occasionally.*

The British rarely and reluctantly change their opinions.

#### 4

An even superficial outlook shows Serbia wedging between Turkey and Austria throughout the 19th century. Its destiny was tied to one or the other of these old empires.

After liberating itself from centuries of Turkish bondage, Serbia fell under Austrian administration. Serbia's struggle for independence had been going on for more than 70 years (1804-1878), only to remain in the Habsburgs' iron grip for the next 25 years.

German thought and culture were the first to sway Serbia. It was mostly under German and Austrian influence that Serbia developed public institutions, as well as science and literature in the first half of the 19th century. Vienna was the cultural center for Serbia and German universities the first foreign schools attended by its students.

The influence was maintained by Serbs from Hungary as well as by students who graduated from universities in Germany and Austria.

As years went by, Serbia fell increasingly under Austrian rule. After the Berlin Congress its borders with the Habsburg Monarchy were on two sides, north and west. The Habsburg Monarchy set up garrisons in Sandzak, south of Serbia.

## SERBIA IN OUR TIMES

Over three quarters of Serbian exports and imports went through markets in Vienna and Budapest. In the economy, Serbia was completely under Austrian control.

Resistance to this subjugation grew, followed by intolerance toward Vienna. Austria was seen as a threat to Serbia's fight for national freedom and unification. It posed an obstacle to Serbia's emancipation and its aspiration to join Western Europe.

The war seemed inevitable.

Germany began to take more significant interest in the Balkans only after its own national unification in 1871. From then to WWI, Germany's Southeastern policy was known as "*Drang nach Osten*"<sup>40</sup>. In everything else, Germany was a reliable follower and principal ally to Austria-Hungary.

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Absolutist and conservative Austria was suspicious of any revolutionary attempt in Europe, national as well as political. The First Serbian Insurrection met with cold reception in Vienna. The geographical proximity of the Belgrade district and the large Serbian community in southern Hungary resolved on helping fellow countrymen south of the Sava and Danube Rivers intensified Austria's opposition to events in Serbia.

Generally, Austria had two objectives in the Balkans. First, to prevent Russia's breakthrough to southeastern Europe at all costs, and second, lasting opposition to every national liberation movement in the Balkans, for the benefit of the survival of the Ottoman Empire.

None of Karadjordje's attempts (there were several from the beginning of the uprising) met with a positive response in Austria. The fact that Turkey was Austria's principal rival in Balkan policy was no help to the Serbs. The Habsburgs maintained an extremely reserved stance throughout the Serbs' liberation efforts.

Ironically, fate had Karadjordje and many of his chiefs seeking refuge precisely in the Habsburg monarchy after the failure of the First Insurrection in 1813.

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<sup>40</sup> "Push toward the East".

## Milan St. Protic

Austria openly expressed its disapproval of liberal provisions in the 1835 Sretenje constitution, encouraging Prince Milos to preserve an autocratic rule and not allow the implementation of "revolutionary acts".<sup>41</sup>

During the reign of Prince Alexander Karadjordjevic (1842-1858), Vienna began to meddle in the Serbia's internal affairs and became a major foreign factor in the Principality.

A new stage developed in relations between Austria-Hungary and Serbia after the so called "secret convention" was signed in 1881. The convention, signed by Prince Milan Obrenovic, was limited to 10 years and subjected Serbia to the interests of the Dual Monarchy completely, in every field (political, national, economic, and financial). Under this agreement, the Serbian monarch practically renounced the sovereignty of the state and put Serbia in the service of Vienna's interests and plans. The convention remained strictly confidential only a small circle of the prince's confidants knowing about it. Just before abdicating in 1889, the Serbian King extended the contract for another 10 years to pass on this harsh obligation to the future regency, his son and successor. The content of the convention was divulged at the beginning of the 20th century.

Never before nor since did Serbia fall completely under the dominance of a foreign power as during the Secret convention of 1881. To make matters worse, King Milan and his foreign minister were handsomely rewarded for this favor by Austria.

The foreign capital in the construction of a railroad through Serbia (Belgrade-Nis-Bulgarian border) came from Austria, though it was said to be from France. When the truth broke out, one of the biggest corruption scandals broke out in Serbia late in the 19th century (1882).

An about-turn in 1903 resulted in Serbia suddenly withdrawing from Austria's influence. Despite repeated demands from Vienna, the government of Nikola Pasic struck a deal for a loan for weapons with France, not Austria (1904). Vienna's response was most severe. It banned the import of pigs, alleging pig disease in

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<sup>41</sup> The Austrian Consulate in Serbia opened in 1836. The first Consul was Antun Mihanovic, obviously a person of South Slavic origin.

## SERBIA IN OUR TIMES

Serbia. Thus began the customs war between Austria and Serbia, lasting until the end of 1911<sup>42</sup>.

Belgrade's response was extremely harsh after the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908ost leading to a war conflict. Austria also played a key role in Montenegro handing over Skadar and stopping Serbia from securing access to the Adriatic Sea in northern Albania in 1912.

The assassination of the Habsburg heir apparent, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, in Sarajevo on St. Vitus' Day 28 June 1914, was the last straw. War could not be averted after Serbian youths assassinated the heir to the Austrian throne, assisted by conspirers from Belgrade. In vain did the Serbian government draft the most conciliatory reply, agreeing to all the terms of Austria's ultimatum. A world war was at the door, for Serbia and all of Europe.

Austria suffered the first and very painful defeat on Mount Cer (western Serbia, August-September 1914). Soon it was routed again in the battle on Kolubara River (November 1914). The army of a small Balkan country was overpowering the might and force of an aristocratic, European nation. The price of these glorious victories was devastating, though. Serbia lost tens of thousands of its men in the first year of the war.

Serbia set out its war goals in the Declaration of Nis, adopted by the National Assembly in December 1914. The principal goal was that victory of Serbia and the Entente has to result in the dissolution of the Dual Monarchy and unification of Yugoslavia, the unification into one South Slavic state of Serbia, Montenegro, and other South Slavs (Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes) who lived under Habsburg rule.

Contemporary Serbian officials were consistent in the achievement of this pledge after the war. They succeeded in their plans at last, breaking up the Habsburg Monarchy (October 1918) and creating on its ruins the state of Yugoslavia on 1 December, 1918. (The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia after 1929).

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<sup>42</sup> In only two years, Serbian exports to Austria dropped from 86.5% in 1905 to a mere 15.5% in 1907.

**Milan St. Protic**

*The "far-sightedness" and "wisdom" of this policy is observed 75 years later.*

\* \* \*

Germany's opinion on Southeastern Europe and its peoples was expressed most accurately by Otto von Bismarck (Prussian and German chancellor 1862-1890). He once said that "all the Balkans are not worth the bones of a single Prussian grenadier".

Germany's Eastern policy began early in the 20th century with the construction of a railroad from Berlin to Baghdad. Its activities and influence in Turkey increased in keeping with this policy.

Germany approved the text of Austria's ultimatum to Serbia, ordered mobilization immediately and entered WWI without hesitation. It appeared on the Serbian battlefield in 1915, when Field Marshal Mackensen commanded a joint Austro-German-Bulgarian army that drove Serbian troops south and forced its retreat across Albania, while they occupied all of Serbia along the way.

The bulk of the German and Austrian armies were on the Salonika front, but due to demands on other combat zones a small size of the corps remained when the breakthrough took place. Most of the Salonika front was held by Bulgarian forces.

Germany, defeated and humiliated in WWI, was wiped off the map of the Great Powers in the 1920s, only to march onto the world scene again with the advent of the Nazis in 1933.

Yugoslavia began to conduct a policy of gradual approach to Italy and Germany with the formation of the government by Milan Stojadinovic in 1935.

On 25 March 1941, Yugoslavia signed the Tripartite Pact in Vienna thus joining the Axis powers<sup>43</sup>. Two days later, a military

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<sup>43</sup> Hitler offered Yugoslavia very favorable conditions for this agreement. These concessions were twofold: guarantees of the territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and allowing Yugoslavia to decide when to join the war on the side of the Axis. The condition was that the decrees of the agreement should not be disclosed to the Yugoslav public. The signatories were two Foreign Ministers, Joachim von Ribbentrop and Aleksandar Cincar-Markovic. The future



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coup ousted the government in Belgrade and on 6 April, members of the Tripartite Pact attacked Yugoslavia.

Under the wing of Hitler's army, which was responsible for large-scale atrocities against Serbs and other non-Croats, the Independent State of Croatia was declared in Croatia on 10 April 1941, controlled by the Ustashi.

During WWII, Serbia was invaded and occupied by Germany, except for Vojvodina which was under Hungarian rule and southern Serbia controlled by Bulgaria.

In fall 1941, the occupying German regime issued a terrifying threat: execution of 100 Serb hostages for every German soldier killed, 50 Serbs for every wounded German. Serbia became a mass execution site. The most horrendous and large-scale executions took place in the cities of Kragujevac and Kraljevo.

A puppet government was set up in Belgrade headed by Gen. Milan Nedic.

In March 1943, representatives of the Supreme Headquarters of the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia (Tito's partisans) signed a deal with Germans in Zagreb, of which two points are important. First, the movement led by Gen. Mihailovic was proclaimed an enemy to both, and second, a joint German-partisan military campaign was agreed in the event of the allies landing on the Adriatic coast. It was Germany who breached the deal, not the partisans.

The Soviet Red Army marched into Serbia from Bulgaria in October 1944. Belgrade was liberated on 20 October. Germany capitulated on 8 May 1945. Communist rule was established in Yugoslavia by the end of 1945.

Hundreds of thousands of ethnic Germans were driven out of Vojvodina to Germany, their property confiscated and nationalized.

Most Yugoslavs working abroad went to Germany in the 1960s and 70s. More than 1 million people, at least half of them Serbs, are believed to have left.

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Nobel laureate for literature Ivo Andric (in 1961) attended the event as Yugoslavia's Ambassador in Berlin.

## Milan St. Protic

A reunified Germany strongly supported Croatia's and Slovenia's secession from Yugoslavia and its independence. Austria also extended wholehearted support to Croatia.

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The German language, its science and culture were models on which Serbs made initial progress in the process of national enlightenment and general progress in the first half of the 19th century.

During that period, Austria and Vienna were, no doubt, the most significant centers of Serbian education and writing.

This is where new technology and knowledge came from -- contraptions, machines and tools. Serbian peasants would go to Budapest selling their pigs, plums, or rope and return with products never seen before in Serbia.

Various lifestyle and fashion items of the time also came from Vienna and Budapest. Serbs emulated Austrians and Hungarians in clothing, cuisine, deportment and everything else that was considered European and modern.

Many educated Germans from Austria and Germany settled in Serbia, founded families and lived a new life. Some of them built quite a fortune in Serbia and became prominent citizens of Serbia<sup>44</sup>.

Throughout the 19th century, German literature was widely translated in Serbia, from popular literary works to serious authors as Lessing, Herder, Goethe, and Schiller<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> The most well-known is Georg Vajfert, originally from Sudeten in Czechoslovakia. It is interesting to note that the wife of the most famous Serbian military commander during WWI Zivojin Misic was also German.

<sup>45</sup> Serbian written language stood under strong German influence in expression and form until the appearance of the "Belgrade style" early in the 20th century. In poetry, Serbian elder poets not only translated from Germany, but looked up to Germans.

The simple truth is that the United States was a colony that won independence after a war with its colonial master late in the 18th century.

During the 19th century, the United States avoided involvement in political affairs on the Old Continent, maintaining a position of strict isolation. There were two principal reasons for this. First, Americans were instinctively suspicious of Europe, its values and problems. Second, America's economic self-subsistence and its vast territory stretching across the continent enabled virtually independent economy.

The United States first broke its golden rule of non-interference in WWI, when it joined the Entente in 1917 and considerably helped crush the enemy.

At the peace conference in Versailles after the war, President Woodrow Wilson emerged as the pivotal figure. Highly educated and inspiring, Wilson presented a document known as The Fourteen Points, in which he outlined the main directions for peace and the future of the world.

However, the United States again withdrew into isolation for the next 20 years, leaving Europe to confront the trials of the far Left and far Right extremisms. The first attempt to establish a world peace organization, the League of Nations, was not welcome in the United States though it was one of Wilson's visions. Washington's final decision was not to join the organization.

The United States was back in the world and involved in European events in WWII. The U.S.A. entered the war in early December 1941 after Japan's treacherous attack on Pearl Harbor. Still, American troops were not directly engaged in Europe until mid-1944. Only then was the western front broken through, when the Allies landed in Normandy, paving the way for the collapse of the Third Reich within less than a year.

The U.S. role in WWII gave it a leading role among the Great Powers, and its victory over Germany and Japan a foremost position in the West.

## Milan St. Protic

The United States was never isolated in foreign policy again. On the contrary: it became more deeply involved in global disputes and relations, becoming what it had heartily fought against in their early days - a superpower.

Below is an illustration showing the change in American awareness and its perception of the outside world.

After WWI, the United States did not join the League of Nations. After WWII, the United Nations were founded on American soil (San Francisco 1945), its seat is again in the United States (New York), and since inception the United States has covered the bulk of the organization's expenses.

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Serbs emigrated to the United States in three different historical waves.

The first lasted from the 1840s to WWI. During that period, Serbs from Lika, Dalmatia, Herzegovina and Montenegro sailed across the ocean to the New World in great numbers, in search of a better and happier life.

They settled in various parts of the United States. Some in northern California, where the oldest Serbian church stands, in the town of Jackson. An important center of Serbian emigrants was Pittsburgh and its vicinity for employment in steel mills. Numerous Serbian colonies were set up in Chicago, Illinois, and Gary, Indiana. Here Serbs found work in the iron and steel industry. An old Serbian settlement was located in Galveston, south Texas, where one of the oldest Serbian churches in America still stands.

Somewhat later, Serbs spread to Montana and founded a town which they called after the Serbian capital Belgrade<sup>46</sup>. They also settled in Wisconsin (Milwaukee), Michigan (Detroit) and Ohio (Cleveland and Columbus).

This oldest generation of Serbian emigrants founded several national organizations (Serbian National Alliance, Serbian National Defense, Serbian Volunteers' Association etc), they built

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<sup>46</sup> Belgrade, Montana. The name has been preserved to this day.

## SERBIA IN OUR TIMES

churches and public buildings and published a number of newspapers in Serbian.

Many American Serbs responded to the call of their fatherland and fought as volunteers with the Serbian and Montenegrin armies in WWI.

The second wave of settlers to the United States came after WWII. These people opposed Communism in Yugoslavia and managed to escape to the West. Many priests and bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, prewar politicians, public figures and university professors also found shelter in America.

The third wave of emigrants to the United States began in the 1960s and continues to this day. Mainly young, educated people left Yugoslavia after graduating from college, to obtain higher university education or find employment as professionals in American private companies.

It is impossible to establish the precise number of Serbs in the United States, for two reasons, at least. First, because not all Serbs came to the United States as citizens of Serbia or Yugoslavia but were citizens of the Habsburg monarchy or Turkey, in the first wave. Many crossed the U.S. border illegally, without any personal papers. Second, there is no clear definition as to who is to be considered a Serb i.e. how far back is the ethnic heritage recognized. Finally, a lot of Serbs changed their surnames, sometimes more than once.

A rough, yet unbiased, estimate would be that today there are between 400,000 and 600,000 persons in the United States who consider themselves Serbs.

For decades, Serbia's political emigrants were regarded as irreconcilable enemies of Tito's regime.

An event that sparked a conflict among American Serbs was a schism in the Serbian Orthodox Church early in the 1960s. A large part of political emigrants insisted that the Serbian Church in the United States separate from the parent church in Yugoslavia, arguing that the Serbian Church in the United States should be independent from the Patriarchate in Belgrade because Belgrade was under Communist rule. The conflict reached the U.S. Supreme Court as it involved considerable assets in real estate and money. The outcome was a schism, with one group siding

with the Belgrade Patriarchate (the federals) and others joined the Serbian Orthodox Church in the free world (the schismatics). Reconciliation was out of the question, as the two groups had no contact at all.

What Tito had failed, Milosevic had achieved, through his ideology of Serbo-Communism. In the late 1980s, former blood foes stood on the same side. Numerous anti-Communists and their descendents, joined and supported the destructive circle of Serbian sins and defeats under the Milosevic-led regime. Formal unification of the Serbian Church in the United States (early 1990s) was orchestrated by Belgrade for the purpose of serving the interests of Serbo-Communists. The erstwhile chairman of the Alliance of Serbian Communists Slobodan Milosevic who never renounced Tito's Communism, was now recognized as the infallible "leader of all of Serbs" in all continents.

There were four levers by which Milosevic and his aides from the shadows prevailed over Serbs in the United States. The first was Church reconciliation.

By proposing to recognize the ranks of the schismatic priests, giving them equal status after unification, Serbo-Communists won the support of the schismatic church. The others were old anti-Communists who supported Serbo-Communism and became their loudspeakers. This time personal motives prevailed. Milosevic's regime let them return to the country freely, helped them publish their books, opened the doors of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the Serbian Writers' Association and this sufficed to buy their loyalty. Milosevic's government managed to provide satellite signal for Serbian State Television programs to systematically poison Serbs all over the world. In Serbian cafés and associations, false images and stories were told about the "heavenly rise of Serbs under Milosevic". Unfortunately, many Serbs believed every word of it. New "national organizations" were founded that spread perfidious Milosevic propaganda despite their superficial appearance.

The eldest and youngest generations of emigrants kept away from these fateful temptations. The former because they had been

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in the United States a long time and the latter because they lost interest in events at home after leaving the country.

Sadly, political emigrants were almost unanimous in their backing of Milosevic.

Thus the impression was created that the entire Serbian colony in the United States supported Slobodan Milosevic and his Serbo-Communist movement in Serbia.

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Let us go back to history for a moment.

President Wilson's Fourteen Points was a written document that set down the principle of national sovereignty including the right to self-determination. Implementation of that principle led to dismemberment of the Habsburg Monarchy and creation of a common state of South Slavs (Yugoslavia).

Though diplomatic ties between Serbia and the United States were established already in the 19th century, this was the first time that the United States had an active part in the Balkan question.

In WWII, the United States was directly involved in events in Yugoslavia, in line with its role as a Great Power. At the start, the American public was all in support of the movement led by Gen. Mihailovic<sup>47</sup>. The United States changed its policy in spring 1943, following the British course, and became increasingly supportive of the partisan movement led by Tito's Communists. Intelligence agents in the field<sup>48</sup> were divided between Mihailovic's supporters and Tito's abettors. Reports by U.S. officers in Yugoslavia giving a balanced description of the situation were lost repeatedly by the bureaucracy in Washington, while reports favoring the partisans were received with full confidence by officials in the U.S. Government.

Not even the highly regarded Royal Ambassador to the United States, Konstantin Fotic and his very good personal ties in

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<sup>47</sup> A propaganda film was made in Hollywood in 1942 on the heroic fight of Mihailovic's combatants.

<sup>48</sup> The U.S. intelligence service in WWII was called the OSS.

Washington, could change the U.S. stance on the internal turmoil in Yugoslavia<sup>49</sup>.

The Adriatic island of Vis was under U.S. Navy control when Tito fled there, fleeing German ambush late in May, 1944.

After the breakup with Stalin, the United States offered more financial and material aid to Yugoslavia, as a reward and encouragement for fending off the Soviet political attack.

Tito came for an official visit to the United States for the first time during the Kennedy administration in 1961. He was a guest at the White House again in 1972 during the Nixon administration and for the third time while President Carter was in the office.

President Jimmy Carter was in Belgrade in 1977; he sent Vice President Mondale and his own mother to Tito's funeral in 1980.

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Of all the Great Powers, the United States altered its position most considerably on the question of the dissolution of former Yugoslavia.

At the outset of the crisis, Washington gave full support to the preservation of Yugoslavia and voiced suspicion about the plans of some republics to acquire international recognition, letting Europe have a leading role in tackling the new problem.

The first U.S. diplomat appointed as an international mediator was former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance (the Vance plan for Croatia 1992, Vance-Owen plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina 1993).

The moment of sky-high glory for U.S. diplomacy was the Bosnia-Herzegovina peace accord concluded in Dayton in November 1995.

The talks in Rambouillet in 1999 were to be capped by another diplomatic victory, but Milosevic let the United States down that time, so their hopes came to nothing.

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<sup>49</sup> Fotic wrote and published his memoirs about these events in 1948 in the United States and in English, entitled "The War We Lost". Fotic was tried for treason at the trial of Gen. Mihailovic and sentenced to 18 years of imprisonment in absentia.



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In retaliation, NATO -- led by the U.S. Air Force -- pounded Serbia brutally for 78 days in spring 1999. Diplomatic relations were broken off a few days after the air strikes began.

Washington recognized the Serbian democratic opposition as a serious political factor only in November 1999.

Formal diplomatic relations were restored after Milosevic's fall on 5 October 2000, but political relations between the United States and Serbia have not been fully normalized to this day.

*Serbian Fallacies*

Judging by the attitudes of the Great Powers toward Serbia, the logical conclusion would be that it failed to attain its national goals because the Great Powers prevented it.

Each of the Great Powers put their interests before Serbian wellbeing. Every Great Power impeded Serbia's progress, even when Serbia was moving forward on its own.

The activities the Great Powers toward Serbia varied slightly throughout history. A review of their relations shows that, more often, they were opposed to Serbian interests than conducive to them.

But are things as they seem?

Are others solely responsible, or is Serbia to blame as well?

Is our fault concealed somewhere and if so, what is it?

1

Serbia's national elite suffers from a very serious and infectious disease. That disease has been transmitted from generation to generation for over 100 years and continues to spread. Our patient, in spite of declining health, is doing nothing to improve his condition, but sinks deeper into the illness.

This national disease from which the Serbian elite suffers is -- *national megalomania*. It is a state of the mind that measures the greatness of a nation solely by the vastness of its territory. The larger the country is under one's control, the stronger it will be, and thus more respected by others.

A tiny Serbia has no chance of success, no matter how developed it is, how enlightened and rich, because it is small. In order to rise and show its power it must expand, in territory alone. Otherwise, it will be an easy prey for enemies lurking everywhere.

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Serbian megalomaniacs contend that the sole purpose of the Serbs' existence is to rule over the largest part of the Balkans and become a regional force. Then, they argue, its future will no longer depend on the Great Powers, but the destinies of smaller nations will depend on the Serbs' will, while Serbia would be able to compete with the biggest nations on an equal footing.

This fateful flaw of the Serbian leaders was most evident in the grand national project of 1918, the creation of Yugoslavia. There was scarcely a figure of importance among the Serbs who was not thrilled by the idea. Among them were the most prominent intellectuals, scientists and politicians.

At the head of this suicidal movement was the monarch himself, King Alexander Karadjordjevic (1914-1934). The dream to reign over a large country hounded him all his life. Instead of four million Serbs, he would have 14 million Yugoslavs. Instead of the border along the Drina River, he wanted the border at Soca river in Slovenia. He wanted Dalmatia and the Adriatic Sea. He wanted Bosnia-Herzegovina. He wanted Zagorje and Slavonia. He wanted more, if there was more to have. He cared nothing about the cost.

Almost all Serbs followed him in his campaign for greatness. Those who loved him and those who did not. Indeed, the fever of Yugoslavism had caught to the broadest circle of Serbian intelligentsia.<sup>50</sup>

The fact that the Serbian name was being sacrificed, its flag and coat of arms, was deemed pure patriotism. The fact that Serbia lost a quarter of its population in World War One was of no consequence. The fact that there were fewer Serbs in Yugoslavia than other nations was of no importance either. The fact that a good number of Yugoslavs participated in the war on the opposite side was of no consideration. The fact that Croats reluctantly joined the unification was disregarded.

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<sup>50</sup> All political parties in Serbia wholeheartedly embraced Yugoslav unification and actively participated in the attainment of this goal.

Some politicians and public figures disputed the name Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes because it "overemphasized the three stems of our nations instead of national unity".

In spite of all this, those Serbian megalomaniacs were willing to forfeit all of Serbia's values on the alter of an enlarged state. Public institutions that were painstakingly developed, the hard earned money, war reparations and the stability of the Serbian currency. Lastly, they agreed to disband Serbia's glorious army, remove its legendary commanders and receive officers of enemy armies and verify their foreign ranks.

Sincere warnings by Zivojin Misic (legendary military commander in WWI) and a cunning scheme by Stojan Protic (Prime Minister 1918 and 1920) following the unification met with the same fate. Their ideas were rejected, as were they.

Overbearing ambitions were an irresistible temptation for Serbian leaders, who would give up everything else.

*The truth is that Yugoslavia was large, but it was not Serbian. Thus it was from the beginning, thus it remained throughout.*

What were the consequences of the Serbian incurable megalomania at the time?

Non-Serb Yugoslavs felt that their status was not equal to that of the Serbs, while Serbs felt that they were being ill-treated and exploited.

There was never internal unity and ethnic harmony in Yugoslavia. The State could be preserved only with an iron fist. King Alexander tried and fell as a tragic victim of his own fallacy. He paid with his life his obsession with the size of the country.

The first Yugoslavia disappeared in the turmoil of WWII, but it was previously attacked as a "dungeon of peoples" where "Greater Serbian hegemony" ruled. This was not only an assessment by the Comintern, but a majority opinion among Croats as well.

In Tito's Yugoslavia everything was harmful to the Serbs and Serbia. Just as Communism in the Soviet Union gave precedence to other nations at the expense of Russians, thus Communism in Yugoslavia trampled what was Serbian, hailing the nationalisms of the other ethnic groups.

*If Yugoslavia was anyone's dungeon, it was a dungeon where Serbia was captured. The painful truth is that Serbia alone shut itself in that dungeon.*

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After the dismemberment of former Yugoslavia, Serbia continued to defend Yugoslavia thanks to Serbo-Communism, claiming it was the best framework for the Serbian question, because "all Serbs in Yugoslavia wished to live in one country".

Lessons from the past were worth nothing. The megalomania of the Serbian so-called "intellectual elite" prevailed again. Again Serbia's success was measured only by the territory that was conquered. Again they wanted to rule over others in order to look more significant in their own eyes. Again they forced people to suffer and die so that these goals are achieved.

And again Serbia suffered defeat.

Besides defeat, Serbs experienced shame and humiliation as well, this time due to the leadership of the Serbo-Communists.

The dream of a great state dispersed, but Serbian leaders did not come to their senses. The fire of national megalomania burns in them to this very day. If they had it their way, they would still be enlarging the state and ruling over others. And proclaim this as a national interest above all other interests.

## 2

Other nations were no more fortunate than the Serbs. As a matter of fact, no nation has fully achieved its territorial claims. But every nation, despite its real power and size of its population, has had unrealistic aspirations, at one point or another.

*Deep down, every small nation believes that Great Powers prevented the achievement of their just goals.*

Serbs are no exception. They became an exception because they persistently refuse to accept reality, learning from their own experience and experiences of others.

Let us start from the Great Powers themselves.

Colonial empires belong to the past. The Portuguese<sup>51</sup> and Spanish vanished in the 19th century, the British and French after

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<sup>51</sup> The last three Portuguese colonies (Angola, Mozambique and Bissau) gained independence in the 1970s.

WWII<sup>52</sup>. The Netherlands, Belgium, then of course Germany and Italy, were all stripped of their colonies. Hundreds of new nations and states developed on the ruins of colonialism in all continents. Wars of independence and the principle of self-determination brought unbelievable changes on the world map. Huge colonial empires were reduced to the limited lands of their respective states in Europe. Some former colonies became sovereign states with territories far greater than the territory of their colonial master. The breakup of the Soviet Union caused huge territorial loss for Russia. Each of the 15 Soviet republics gained independence and Russia did not even attempt to stand in their way.

Therefore, even Great Powers suffer unpleasant downfalls when their positions weaken.

The situation with Serbia's neighbors stands as follows.

Austria was a powerful central European empire. Today it is a small, yet prosperous, country hidden in the Alps. In the meantime, its dissolution enabled the creation of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia. Then Czechoslovakia separated and Yugoslavia was torn by civil war, so that new independent states developed of former Austrian provinces: Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Hungary today is far from the state it was in the Middle Ages, in territory as well as importance. Many Hungarians live outside of Hungary today, in Romania, Slovakia, and Serbia<sup>53</sup>. However, this was no cause for Hungary to officially raise the question of national unification, let alone start a war to that end<sup>54</sup>.

Bulgaria suffered two defeats in two world wars because it refused to accept the fact that Bulgaria drawn up under the San Stefano agreement would never materialize. Bulgaria makes no mention of that option today, nor territorial claims on any of its neighbors.

Greece was forced to give Turkey the entire territory of Asia Minor coast with Smyrna and Constantinople and to resettle

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<sup>52</sup> The process lasted more than 20 years.

<sup>53</sup> There are some Hungarians in Croatia and Slovenia as well.

<sup>54</sup> An organization called "Sixty-four Counties" has been operating recently in Hungary, calling for the unification of all Hungarian ethnic territories.

### SERBIA IN OUR TIMES

more than one million ethnic Greeks early in the 1920s. It had to comply with a decision by the Great Powers that Cyprus would not be annexed to Greece but would become first a British protectorate, and then an independent State late in the 1950s. Thirty years later, Greek Cyprus was received into the E.U. membership, so both states inhabited by Greeks are together at last<sup>55</sup>.

From the Italian point of view, the rejection of the Great Powers to recognize the 1915 London Pact was a perfidious act against Italian national interests. Italy's disappointment helped Mussolini come to power and the terrible war adventure ended with Italy's capitulation in 1943. The result was mandatory relinquishing of the small territory and islands off the Dalmatian coast it was given after World War One<sup>56</sup>.

There are numerous examples like these throughout history. Unfortunately, none of them was compelling enough to cool the heated minds of Serbian megalomaniacs.

### 3

It is precisely this national megalomania that led the Serbs to clash with the Great Powers in recent times.

*Serbs were not troublesome because they were Serbs, but because they wanted to have too large a country, while they did not have a real basis for that claim.*

The first signal that Serbian territorial expansion was a problem for the Great Powers came after the end of the First Balkan War (1913). Serbia was told that access to the Adriatic Sea through northern Albania was not in accordance with the interests of the Great Powers. Ever since, whenever Serbia opposed the Great Powers by stating its territorial claims, it lost battles, territories and population.

In principle, Great Powers prefer that no local state or nation prevails over a certain region, that a balance is maintained be-

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<sup>55</sup> Greece acceded to the E.U. in 1981.

<sup>56</sup> In the interwar period, Italy was awarded the Istria peninsula with the towns of Rijeka, Zadar and a few Dalmatian islands.

tween them. Whoever tries to disrupt this balance to his own advantage and impose his authority over others inevitably elicits opposition from the Great Powers and thwarts in carrying out his plans, by hook or by crook. This happened to Serbs several times in modern history.

In our age, foreigners see Serbia as a petty colonialist. Serbs regard Serbian provinces outside of present-day Serbia as their own. Serbs believe that historic justice entitles them to every land that was part of the state of Serbia at a particular moment in history. Yet the Great Powers see them as little Balkan conquerors.

If the Great Powers agreed to give up their colonies, what right does Serbia have to continue to exert power over those who do not want its government? If the Great Powers recognized the independence of so many non-European nations and territories, why can Serbia not understand this historic reality?

To make matters worse, Serbia resorted to arms every time she thought her rights and territories had been jeopardized.

The answer is the same to both questions:

*What Serbia does is unacceptable and impermissible and the international community has an obligation to stop this behavior with all available means.*

Serbian megalomaniacs will ask if this is fair, whether the same standards apply for everyone.

No, of course not. But this is precisely the precious knowledge that Serbs should have learned more than 100 years ago. They haven't, which is why they suffer blow after blow and still wonder why.

To be honest, when Serbs were in a position to decide they did exactly the same. Serbs had one rule for themselves and another for others.

*Justice is always in the hands of those who are more powerful.*

Unfortunately and unjustly, it is civilians who suffer through, no fault of their own, while the bearers of these megalomaniac ideas continue to pursue their destructive schemes unharmed.



## SERBIA IN OUR TIMES

Then international punishment comes to boot. Because of its disastrous policy over the past 20 years, Serbia came under attack from the Great Powers. The image of an aggressor was created about it, the result being that Serbia lost wars, was mercilessly bombed and is presently accused of harboring war criminals.

Concurrently, an anti-Serbian school of history developed in the West. It was argued that Serbia's aspiration to subjugate those who are weaker originates from Serbian history and that Serbian nationalism under Milosevic is nothing but renewed Serbian hegemony from the 19th century. A continuing thread of Serbia's plans for conquest was sought, from Garasanin's "Nacertanije" (Serbian national program from 1844) to this day. Despite the falsity of these assertions, they largely shaped the opinion of the foreign public about Serbia and the Serbs.

Serbia was marked as the culprit and the culpable one. Thus its international position is not equal to that of others. It is a discouraging illusion to expect that any Great Power would stand on Serbia's side. Most likely, they will reach agreement among themselves in advance and then present it as the best possible solution.

We have seen that more than once in recent past.

### 4

The state of the Serbian nation today is the following.

The Serbian population has decreased over the past few decades, with the death rate exceeding the birth rate. Regrettably, Serbs are losing the race with nature.

Today, Serbs are the oldest nation in Europe. Serbian average age is around 40. Serbia is a country of elders, not youth.

There are scarcely more than 60% of Serbs in all of Serbia, if Kosovo is included. As opposed to this, Kosovo Albanians have the highest birth rate in Europe.

It is quite easy to draw the right conclusion from these facts.

In the 20th century, Serbs lost around 2 million of its people. Serbia lost a quarter of its entire population only in WWI. A ma-

major victory in the Great War was paid with too many lives. In WWII, at least 700,000 Serbs were killed, executed or vanished<sup>57</sup>.

Since 1944, thousands of the best of Serbs have left the country, going abroad never to return. Every year, Serbia loses a valuable part of its academic population, with no hope that the loss will ever be recovered. As a man suffering from hemorrhage, Serbia cannot prevent this brain drain.

It transpires that Serbia is an old European nation, by its duration and history. Thus Serbia has exhausted much of its force. Serbs do not procreate easily, so their number declines generation after generation.

If they lack youth, Serbs should have wisdom. They used to win their battles with strength, today they are not capable of doing so. Instead of fighting, they should know how to win with reason. Their advantage should lie in historic experience, not on the battlefield.

Serbs will continue to stumble, it seems, until they realize that natural survival and internal enlightenment are much more crucial goals than any part of the territory. Reputation and respect are earned through intellectual magnificence, not physical size.

*Power of thought, not a blow from the baton.*

The foremost condition for this is to be cured of national megalomania. First, the self-styled Serbian elite, then the wounded and deceived nation.

Infected tissue must be removed otherwise the whole body will become infected.

Painful?

Of course, but, frankly, there is no other way.

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<sup>57</sup> Serbia lost 1,200,000 people in World War One, mostly men in their prime of life. Official statistics say that Yugoslavia lost 1,706,000 people in WWII, but the figure appears overstated. More accurate statistics put the number at around one million, of which most were Serbs.

## SERBS AND COMMUNISM

There are three key questions facing the Serbs as a nation today.

Answers to those questions should help us understand contemporary times in Serbian history and recognize the background of the present state of the Serbian people, its causes and effects.

The first question is ideological:

Why and how did Communism and nationalism merge into a single ideology dubbed Serbo-Communism?

The second question is national:

How far were Serbs on the path to national and cultural emancipation before Communism had been established?

And the third question is political:

What kind of changes could 5 October 2000 achieve and why did it fail? What prevented the event from being marked down as a historical turning point and what kind of turning point should it have been?

Serbs lost the direction of their national progress a long time ago. Roving the wasteland of deceit and delusion for most of the 20th century, they succumbed to fallacious notions about themselves and the outside world.

Unable to find the course they lost, and aim their vision toward the future, they have been stumbling and declining for decades. At present, their objective position and the level of their national awareness give little hope for a speedy way out.

There exists a solution, nonetheless. It would be false to say that everything was wasted and that there is no rescue. The disagreeable truth is that the solution cannot be attained easily and painlessly.

In recent times, Serbs lacked intellectual elite capable of proposing a comprehensive national and cultural model, for reasons that are crystal-clear. A large part of Serbia's elite died out during 50 years of Communist rule. The influence of the prewar elite faded gradually, only to disappear entirely over the past 20 years. What we have now is neither an elite nor an intelligentsia, but a pack of upstarts, poorly organized and corrupt. Their intellectual feebleness, inability to view the past and present, or comprehend contemporary world, their obsession with Communism and primitive nationalism, all made an imprint on the present spirit of the Serbian nation.

Serbs need national enlightenment above all. It is an ongoing process that implies liberating the nation of the dregs of the Communist legacy. It is a process of shedding bad habits and customs acquired over the years. It includes: rejecting wrong pre-judgments and false ideas about reality; recognizing true values, domestic as well as foreign; finally, defining a modern national and social model in order to develop individuality rather than collectivity.

## 1

Until Milosevic, Serbdom and Communism were never on the same side.

Whoever considered himself a Serb was taken to be an anti-Communist? And *vice versa*. Those who accepted Communism had to renounce their Serbian identity. A national idea and a universal dogma simply could not go together.

Serbian national idea determines Serbs as a nation, their consciousness, views, history, customs and life. Serbdom covers and contains past experiences, values, and achievements of Serbs as an entity. Obviously, over time, this idea was undergoing gradual and continual historical development.

As every other national concept, the Serbian idea was limited to a specific nation (the Serbs). Often though, it borrowed influences and examples from others, implanting them in its own na-

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tional model. Thus, Serbdom represented a combination of what was authentic and what was imported. In many ways it resembled other national ideas, especially European.

Communist ideology exceeds and obliterates national awareness and history as a whole. It seeks to eliminate the present with the ambition of building a new reality. Its rules are rigorous and absolute. For a Communist, history serves only as a means to prove the rightness of the Communist doctrine as it annuls preceding achievements and values.

From a philosophical standpoint, Communism is a commanding concept. It bans any scrutiny of the accuracy of proclaimed judgments. It prohibits any attempt of individual thinking. Communism is a system of thought that is accepted obediently or not accepted at all.

From a historical standpoint, Communism was an ideology in the service of the Soviet Union. Communists from all over Europe were mere followers and executors of orders from Moscow. The Comintern was set up so that all Communist parties would be run and controlled from one center. Communism offered identical solutions for all countries and nations: a Soviet type republic completely subjected to Russia and her interests.

The Serbian idea emerged early in the 19th century in the form of a State idea, similar to most national ideas in Europe. It went on to reach the stage of a nation-state, infusing it with cultural content with the intent to create a "cultural model" of its own. There was no place for a universal ideology in that process. Political, economic and cultural institutions in Serbia were sufficiently developed by the end of the 19th century, not to need any kind of authoritarian internationalism.

The Serbian national concept was thus a major obstacle to Communism, so it is only natural that Serbdom and Communism clashed immediately.

If this was so, how did opposing ideas, entirely contrasting one another in essence as well as in appearance, fuse into a single ideology?

That was exactly what had happened under Milosevic. Serbo-Communism is, no doubt, a monstrous creation that put together two contradictory ideas and led Serbs on the most tragic track.

The wrong path taken in the 1990s ended in the demise of the Serbian national thought all together.

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Two different notions seem to be combined here: the notion of a national idea and the notion of a political philosophy.

Purists would say a correlation between the two is logically possible. Why is it not possible to be a Serb (or a member of any other nation, for that matter) and a Communist at the same time?

Self-perceived philosophers would object that the analysis departed from an uncertain assumption, essentially unverified. In their opinion, the assumption that Serbdom and Communism are conflicting concepts represents an ideological stance that reduces a nation to an ideology.

Other critics could say that different political ideologies, parties and leaders are easily found within a single nation. In that sense, Serbs are no different than others. Ideological wars that were fought at particular eras in history prove nothing. Serbian nation, as any other, is swayed by one ideology or another, yet it retains its fundamental traits and character; they do not disappear. There are numerous such cases among other nations.

In our opinion, these remarks are inappropriate as well as inaccurate.

Our point is not general but specific. We were talking specifically about the Serbian national consciousness and Yugoslav Communism. A study of the relationship between nation and Communism on a universal level would take us too far (even though the result of such an examination would probably be similar). Our interest is confined to explaining the relationship between a specific national idea and a specific variant of Communism at a specific point in history and a specific level of development. Besides, we do not claim the correlation is impossible, but that it is ill-fated.

It is interesting to note that Serbo-Communism rarely revealed itself in sheer form. Sometimes it appeared more as a national concept and sometimes its Communist feature seemed dominant.

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Now we come to the core of the problem.

What is indeed the very essence of the ideology of Serbo-Communism?

Its starting point is in that Communism was a natural stage in the historical development of Serbian national idea. At a certain point, it met the demands of Serbian collective consciousness. Communism was welcomed as a novel concept, inspiring people with a new strength and vision of the future. Communism brought down Serbia's weary (*bourgeois*) institutions whose historical role was declining anyway.

Popular interest required an acceptance of the Communist view of the world and its political, economic, and philosophical mechanisms of power; Serbian national accomplishments had become outdated; Serbian *bourgeoisie* was undoubtedly deteriorating. It was alienated from popular interests, looking out for its own subsistence. It distanced itself from the ordinary people and let the whirl of history carry it away. Only a new force, a new idea that would change reality radically, as the one embodied in the Communist Party and Communist ideology, was capable of defending popular interests in the flurry of World War Two. Time had come for the working class to take power and responsibility, instead of the *bourgeoisie*.

The second point of Serbo-Communism is the belief that it is not Communism to blame for the failure of Serbdom after WWII, but Titoism. Tito was experimenting with other Yugoslav nations and their national rights at the expense of Serbian national interests. Tito broke Serbian unity dividing it into separate political entities (republics and provinces). He was declared the sole buri-er of Serbdom.

*Alas, Communism as a universal ideology was never disputed by Serbo-Communists; quite the contrary.*

In their opinion, the Serbian idea was understood only territory-wise. The greatness of the Serbian state was measured only by the space controlled by the government in Belgrade. And that became their utmost political objective.

Two conditions were necessary in order to achieve this goal: national unity and an armed force. Communism offered both: The Communist Party's authority ensured a wholeness of the nation and the government; control over the army, again based on ideology, ensured dominance over others.

For Serbo-Communists, democracy was more than a needless flaw. It represented the first threat to the survival of the existing political order. When Communism was in a global crisis, freedom of thought and political competition threatened to undermine the solidity of the government from inside. Protecting Serbian interests was excellent justification to stop the spirit of democracy from breaking through. People were told that democracy was a menace to firmness of the nation and sapped national strength: "A variety of political ideas could only help enemies of Serbdom." The authoritarian power, therefore, had to remain in the hands of the Communist Party. The Party was to be modified only so much as to eliminate the influence of Titoism and its internal ideological edge, returning to the old Bolshevik tradition.

*At one point Communism vowed it would "save" all of humanity. Now Serbian Communists were pledging to "save" all of Serbs. In both cases the consequences of the "salvation" were disastrous.*

A simple interest was at the backdrop of the new ideology. The collapse of Communism in Europe frightened Serbo-Communists that the same fate awaited them. In order to preclude what had happened in the Soviet camp, they reached for the only option that was left: Defense of the Serbs and their interests was put up as the goal of all goals. Those who believed in the global revolution until yesterday and believed the nation and state were a bourgeois fortresses that need be destroyed, transformed overnight into protectors of the nation and the state. Communists in Serbia went from exclusive interpreters of universal truths to sole interpreters of Serbian truths.

*Communism in Serbia could not survive any other way. Its only chance of survival was cloaked in nationalism.*

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## SERBIA IN OUR TIMES

Thus Serbian Communists consequently played a game of prejudice, half-truths and outright lies. Their strongest weapon was and remained brazen abuse of Serbian history.

The fact that ordinary Serbs were separated from their past, knowing almost nothing about their history, during half of a century under Tito turned out to be very helpful. The devious plan could be implemented with virtually no obstacles.

The false image, tailored by Serbo-Communism, contained a few crucial untruths to substantiate the rightness of the new ideology.

The first lie was that for centuries a powerful international conspiracy had been working against Serbs and their national interests. The conspiracy involved Great Powers and organizations in the West: the United States, Europe, the Vatican, Jews, Freemasons, and sundry known as well as obscure masters from the shadow: The ultimate objective being to destroy the Serbs and wipe them off the stage of history.

The geo-strategic position of Serbs and Serbia is so important to Great Powers that the fight against Serbs is a question of foremost international value. Serbs are the center of the world and the most vital global interests are projected through them.<sup>58</sup>

The second historical lie of Serbo-Communism was the definition of the Serbian historical course. It claimed that Serbs had been an Eastern Orthodox and Slavic nation whose only true ally and defender was and still is Russia. Serbs never belonged to the Western civilization, but always and forever to the East. Pro-Western views among Serbs were either mendacious or misleading, to "sully pure Serbdom" from the inside. From the beginning, mercenaries of the Great Powers conspired to undermine the Slavic ties between Serbs and Russians. This wiped out the true nature of the Serbs and placed their authentic culture under negative foreign influence. Serbia's national development in the

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<sup>58</sup> Serbo-Communism developed some outrageous theories about Serbs as the oldest nation, their unique place and role in history, the divine character of the Serbian medieval State and culture. Even archeology was cited to confirm the exceptional quality of Serbs as a nation and to testify about their existence from the pre-historic times.

19th century was deeply wrong because it was inspired by Western ideas instead of seeking a genuine pattern of its own.

The third historical abuse by Serbo-Communism was its explanation of Yugoslavism. On one side, it argued that the common state of South Slavs was the best way to solve the Serbian question: all Serbs finally lived in a common state. On the other side, it went out of the way to prove century's long hostility between Croats and Serbs. This peaked in the Independent State of Croatia during WWII, when hundreds of thousands of Serbs were listed and persecuted for the purpose of purging Croatia of Serbs. Franjo Tudjman<sup>59</sup> and his party were champions of this genocidal policy in our day. Serbs were again threatened with extermination as they were five decades ago.

Some lunatics went even further to prove that all South Slavs (except Slovenes) developed from the Serbs. Their theory was based on an scandalous presupposition that Serbs had been partitioned in several ethnic groups, thanks to the anti-Serbian policy of The Vatican, the West and Tito in order to weaken the strength of the Serbian indigenous unity.

Yet, Serbo-Communism was unable to answer to a simple question:

How did Serbs successfully resolve the national question in Yugoslavia when in it they associated with former Serbs now members of different nations, working consistently to destroy everything that was Serbian?

The fourth Serbo-Communist fallacy was the most detrimental. Supposedly, throughout their history Serbs were predestined to sacrifice themselves for higher universal goals. The more they died, the closer they were to their ideal. Serbo-Communists perversely delighted in repeating the number of Serbian victims in the 20th century, even increasing the number. They claimed that Serbs were "victorious in war and conquered in peace". A notorious statement by a prominent Serbo-Communist was that "we may not know how to work, but we know how to fight"<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup> Croatian President responsible for winning Croatian independence in 1992.

<sup>60</sup> Famous expression of Slobodan Milosevic.

## SERBIA IN OUR TIMES

Such artificial patriotism exposes a horrifying truth. Serbo-Communists were ready to send people to war and death so that their dreams could come true. Every Serb deserved to die to achieve their goal: Serbs were to be forfeited for preserving the last torch of Communism in southeastern Europe.

*National history served Serbo-Communism only to establish and reinforce its totalitarian rule and for no other reason whatsoever.*

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The roots of Serbo-Communism probably go back to the 1960s. A group of Serbian Communist ideologues criticized the political situation in Yugoslavia. Possibly the dismissal of leaders of UDBA<sup>61</sup> in 1966 caused an upheaval. A speech by Dobrica Cosic<sup>62</sup> at a Party Congress in 1968 was definitely momentous

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<sup>61</sup> Communist Secret police in Yugoslavia; Yugoslav variant of the KGB.

<sup>62</sup> The political and literary work of Dobrica Cosic deserves special mention. He began as a fervent Communist (member of the Communist Party since prewar times), a participant of the war and the revolution. Until 1968, he was a disciplined soldier loyal to the Party, its ideology and policy. He then dared to speak about the position of Serbia and Serbs, and incurred the wrath of Serbo-Communism. Cosic was never persecuted or arrested, only sidelined. He immediately supported Milosevic and was his intellectual mainstay, though he never joined Milosevic's party, yet he attended the founding convention of the Socialist Party of Serbia in 1990. He accepted Milosevic's offer and became President of the FR Yugoslavia in 1992. The Demon of Serbia (Slobodan Milosevic) discarded him in June 1993.

Here are Dobrica Cosic's three characteristic praises on Milosevic:

"I respect Milosevic's persistent fight for the national rights of the Serbs. I believe he has enabled intellectual freedoms we did not have before. Therefore, I support his entire political program, though I consider it deficient in democracy."

"I believe that no politician since Nikola Pasic in WWI has worked under harder conditions and a heavier burden than Milosevic. He courageously set out to renew the Serbian State and salvage the Serbs from new slavery and destruction. The most powerful enemies and insurmountable obstacles oppose that goal."

"Of all Serbian politicians over the last 50 years, Milosevic had done the most for his people. I believe in his general national policy, his strategy and tactics are realistic and on the right course."

*(Politika, September 1991)*

for the birth of Serbo-Communism, which then grew stronger in debates on the constitutional structure of former Yugoslavia, early in the 1970s. The Party's brusque response to the "Serbian nationalists" resulted in discharge of several high officials from Serbia. Alas, the seed of Serbo-Communism was already sown. Removed from power, the Serbo-Communists had an additional reason, this time a personal one, to pursue their operations and spread their ideas.

Serbo-Communism took root in two crucial academic institutions: the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the Serbian Writers' Association. The self-styled Serbian intelligentsia was delighted with this mixture of Communism and nationalism. Unfortunately, too many renowned Serbs gave in to this distorted kind of thinking.

Serbo-Communists had another mitigating circumstance: Only Titoists stood opposite them. The choice was then quite limited: Either Serbo-Communism or Titoism. There was no other option.

Milosevic and his Communist Party of Serbia did not adopt the ideology of Serbo-Communism right away. Tito's legacy was still deeply implanted in the consciousness and mentality of Serbian Communists. Milosevic's early statement that "Serbian nationalism is a serpent in the Serbian bosom" is one to remember.

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In his historical novels, Cosic described people and events in Serbian history from the 1890s to the 1960s. He allowed himself the "artistic freedom" that did not bind him to respect historical facts and dates. Thus an image was created about a nation which knew almost nothing about its history, based on Cosic's imagination and interpretation, not on serious and accurate historical evidence. In those novels, the point is that he presented Communism and its revolution as a natural and positive phase in the development of Serbian national consciousness. Thanks to Cosic's literature greatly, today's generations of Serbs acquired a distorted image of Serbia's past.

Cosic's foremost ambition was to be accepted and remembered as the first and unattainable intellectual and national authority among Serbs in the latter part of the 20th century. He put all his strength and influence into the achievement of that goal. One could say he was mostly successful in this.

A well known Serbian playwright said about Cosic: "He pushed Serbia into Communism with both hands, but did nothing to pull it out".

## SERBIA IN OUR TIMES

Not much time elapsed, however, before the idea reached the very top of Serbia's regime. An evil ideology such as Serbo-Communism lacked the political means for implementation. In spite of its potential power, the idea would have stayed a dead letter on paper had it not been embraced by people who had a monopoly of power in Serbia.

Once Milosevic became the standard bearer of Serbo-Communism, he was holding the banner high until he cast Serbia and the Serbs into the abyss.

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The fundamental document of Serbo-Communism was, no doubt, the "Memorandum" of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences from 1986. It leaked before it was completed, without the authors' permission or knowledge. Its content, nonetheless, speaks volumes about the true meaning of the Serbo-Communist ideology.

The authors rebuffed any connection with Milosevic and his policy. Still, one of the writers of the Memorandum admitted:

"It would be unthinkable that Milosevic did not correlate with the "Memorandum" on important questions of the Yugoslav society. There is nothing unusual if his views on some of the problems and solutions coincided with those in the document. Most likely he did not hear for the first time of these problems in the "Memorandum", but found the Memorandum confirming some of his own observations."<sup>63</sup>

Two academicians who actively participated in drafting the Memorandum became senior officials of Milosevic's Socialist Party of Serbia.<sup>64</sup> Other participants in drafting the document publicly supported his policy throughout. None of the authors ever criticized Milosevic's government.

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<sup>63</sup> "Defense of Innocence," *NIN* 8 September 1995.

<sup>64</sup> The Communist party of Serbia was renamed Socialist party of Serbia in early 1990s. Mihailo Markovic was the first deputy chairman of the SPS and an ideologue. Antonije Isakovic was also a senior official in Milosevic's party and a member of parliament. Both are hardened Communists from before WWII.

Dobrica Cosic was believed to be the central figure of the "Memorandum". The authors denied this, though one of them conceded:

"As a well-known political dissident, Cosic was not fitting to participate in order not to discredit the document beforehand in the eyes of the politicians... Cosic made his contribution through ideas and suggestions, conveying them at three meetings that we had with him..."<sup>65</sup>

As much as they tried to deny any association with Milosevic, the authors of the "Memorandum" could not refute two facts. First, that Milosevic's policy relied heavily on assertions and judgments set down in the "Memorandum": There is no difference between the paper and Milosevic's political beliefs. Second and more obvious: The authors had an important role in Milosevic's party or acted as strong external support.

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The first part of the "Memorandum" focuses on the economic situation in former Yugoslavia. The authors' sought to prove in every way the economic backwardness of Serbia compared to the other republics. The idea was to provide evidence that this had been done intentionally in order to lessen and restrict the influence of the Serbian Communist authorities in the federal leadership of former Yugoslavia. The examination of this topic takes up more than half of the entire document.

The political section discusses the rights, findings, and interpretations of the founders of Serbo-Communism. Here are a few typical quotations from the text of the "Memorandum"<sup>66</sup>:

"The position of Serbia should be regarded in the framework of Slovenia's and Croatia's political and economic domination as they were the ones that proposed the changes in every system so far... Such changes should depart from the proclaimed policy of equal development. It would not be acceptable if the two repub-

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> All quotations excerpted from a copy of the Memorandum obtained through unofficial channels in the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1986.

## SERBIA IN OUR TIMES

lics (i.e. Croatia and Slovenia) were in a position to impose a solution corresponding to their own economic interests".

"Slovenes and Croats set up their own national Communist parties before the WWII and gained significant influence in the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia... The coalition was solidified by long-term cooperation between Tito and Kardelj<sup>67</sup>, the two most prominent political figures in post-war Yugoslavia, whose authority in the centers of power was beyond dispute".

Is one to conclude that the fault lies in that Communist Parties in Slovenia and Croatia were stronger than the Communist Party in Serbia? Would Serbian interests have been better protected if it had been different?

This clearly shows the authors were incapable of any contemplation beyond Communist categories; they saw nothing outside this vicious circle.

The following example is even more evident:

"... during the war (i.e. WWII), Serbia's position was not even officially equal, much less essentially, when decisions of far-reaching importance were made on the future State system. This does not mean that Serbs would not have approved of federalism as the best arrangement for a multiethnic community, but it means that they were compelled to accept a solution without prior preparation and support from Serbian political organizations (i.e. Communist Party). This opened the door to possible dissolution of Yugoslavia".

Hence, the authors of the "Memorandum" believed that the key problem of Serbdom was that others and not Serbs had the main say in the Yugoslav Communist leadership. They did not dispute that the Communist Party represented the legitimate popular will.

The bottom line question of all this big talk is the following:

What right did the Serbo-Communists have to decide on the nation's fate?

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<sup>67</sup> Edvard Kardelj, life-time Tito's closest associate; a Slovenian; considered the second only to Tito.

The fact is that, before WWII, Communists in Serbia were a negligible group of a few hundred who were open servants of the Soviet Union.

Symptomatic quotations from the "Memorandum" continue as follows:

"Yugoslavia is not organized as a community of equal citizens or equal nations and nationalities, but as a community of eight equal territories..."

"... The 1974 Constitution divided Serbia into three parts. The Serbia's autonomous provinces (Vojvodina and Kosovo) are equal to the republics in everything except in the definition of a State, and they do have the same number of representatives in the important bodies of the Yugoslav federation..."

This is exactly the core of Milosevic's policy. This is where he looked for ideas for his decisions and actions in the breakup of the former Yugoslavia. He implemented to detail the assertions and conclusions that were composed and shaped by Serbo-Communists, writers of the "Memorandum".

The question of Kosovo had an exceptional place in the "Memorandum":

"The physical, political, legal, and cultural genocide against the Serbs in Kosovo is the hardest defeat since the Serbian liberation war of 1804 insurrection and the uprising of 1941. Responsibility for this defeat lies mostly with the living legacy of the Comintern, the national policy of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the Serbian Communists' obedience to this policy, then to costly ideological and political fallacies, ignorance, immaturity or the hardened opportunism of generations of Serbian politicians after the war, always defensive and concerned more about what others think of them, than of objective facts that condition the future of the people they are in charge of".

It derives from this that everything was okay with Communism and Communists except that they were not "good enough Serbs". If they were more concerned about Serbia's status in Yugoslavia they would even deserve commendation. In the perception of the "Memorandum" authors, Communism did no harm to the Serbs other than failing to secure national equality.



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They recognize this equality only in the sense of equality among Communist leaders whose authority of government had never been questioned. (Their linking of the First Serbian Insurrection against the Ottomans in 1804 and the beginning of the Communist revolution in 1941 into one historical sequence is telling enough in itself.)

The "Memorandum" devoted special attention to Serbian rights earned in the WWII and the Communist revolution (1941-1945). They extensively referred to the decisions of Communist government on Serbian cultural institutions in Croatia:

"During the national liberation fight (i.e. the Communist revolution) and immediately after its completion, the national life of Serbs in Croatia developed intensely in their own cultural and educational institutions".

It seems undisputable, after this, that the "Memorandum" indeed served as the fundamental ideological basis for Milosevic's Serbo-Communism.

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*In the end, Serbo-Communism led Serbs to unforgivable crimes and wrongdoings.*

As Communists did as they pleased, giving themselves the right to absolute historical legality, thus Serbo-Communism justified misdeeds and violence perpetrated in the name of Serbs. A nation morally corrupt and deeply troubled had the excuse to feast on others, to damage and destroy. War, a dirty and inglorious war of the 1990s, was the inevitable outcome of the fallacies of Serbo-Communism. Their leaders sowed chaos and terror, knowing this was the only way to preserve their position and power. In their eyes, Serbs were nothing more than a mere vehicle for realizing their wicked plans.

*Serbo-Communism was, therefore. The last romp of European Communism.*

\* \* \*

Due to this ideology and its leaders, the Serbs were seen as a savage, evil, and primitive nation responsible for large-scale atrocities, which should stand before international justice.

Serbs were described in the vilest of terms. The Serbian name became synonymous to everything that is hideous and violent in today's age. Even when they faced retaliation from the world's superpower and the nation's total collapse (NATO bombardment of Serbia in 1999), the Serbo-Communists did not consider withdrawing or giving up. They never surrendered, nor admitted their sins. On the contrary: They made the entire nation a hostage of their physical survival. They ignored their own guilt, justifying it with the highest national interests. In the past, a personal sacrifice for the welfare of the people was a national virtue. Today, cowardice and hiding from accountability are considered national heroism.

Serbo-Communists have been ousted but not defeated. Unfortunately, their evil and destructive spirit still prevails over a large part of Serbian reality and Serbia's public scene.

## 2

Serbian cultural model<sup>68</sup> has not been examined for a long time.

First Titoism imposed a Communist doctrine as the basis of the new social consciousness that lasted for nearly half a century. The doctrine had an unchanging quality: Serbian cultural attainments were systematically trampled and obliterated.

Then Serbo-Communism replaced and inherited Titoism by imposing a distorted view of the Serbian nation, its interests and development. Serbo-Communist primitivism neatly superimposed itself on the feeble spirit of the nation resulting from long years of Communism in Yugoslavia.

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<sup>68</sup> The "cultural model" of a given nation could be defined as a set of all historic characteristics of that particular nation. It includes all aspect of collective experiences (political, social, economic and cultural).

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Common to both ideologies (Titoism and Serbo-Communism) is that both severed ties between Serbian cultural model and its Western attributes. Both detached the Serbian idea from its historical and cultural origins. Both imposed value systems that were contrary to those developed over the past 200 years, prior to the Communist takeover.

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From a historical viewpoint, there is no dispute that Serbia's course from 1804 to the end of WWI followed in the footsteps of old European nations. There is no doubt either that all national institutions in Serbia were constructed on the model of West European political culture and its achievements<sup>69</sup>.

This refers not only to political, but to economic and cultural developments as well. Let us name a few.

Prince Milos Obrenovic carried out an agrarian reform in the 1830s, annulled Ottoman landholdings transforming them into peasant private properties.

The Serbian Civil Code of 1844 was crafted according to the Austrian example.

The well-known democratic Constitution that introduced parliamentary government in Serbia adopted in 1888 was written on the model of the Belgian 1831 Constitution.

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The Serbian farmer was compelled to appear on the international market comparatively early, and find his way about in a myriad of currencies, disorganized communications, and precarious sales. Although largely illiterate, he had to learn the ropes in dealing with traders, money lenders, and swindlers of all kinds. Managing his own estate, paying taxes and other public dues,

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<sup>69</sup> Serbia's foreign policy should be separated from this. In the 19th century, it relied mostly on imperial Russia as a consequence of similarities in foreign political interests. In all other aspects, the developments of Serbia and Russia differed substantially.

made the Serbian farmer recognize his interests, and though deeply distrustful and suspicious of everyone, he became independent in management and confident in decision-making. In early 19th century, wealth did not come easily and not to everyone. Commercial dealings, often unfair and privileged, did not suit everyone. This caused a disgruntlement among farmers which often threatened the foundations of government.

Revolts erupted frequently and were crushed in blood by authorities. The last was in eastern Serbia in 1883. Yet each of these revolts was stirred for political reasons, not economic or social. Serbs rose against the government because they wanted to replace them and see someone else in power, not because they expected the authorities to dole out mercy and feed the hungry.

Those were indeed hard times in Serbia, when people barely made ends meet. The poor were not few or negligible. But they were never famished to the point of food-craving stomachs stirring rebellions and revolutions. Uprisings in Serbia were not instigated by miserable no-names, but by persons of repute, merchants, and wealthy farmers.

The Serbian *bourgeoisie* accepted Western influences and emulated their ways in their daily life. City building shed its Oriental legacy, aspiring toward the urban structure and style of architecture prevailing in Vienna and Paris.

In the latter half of the 19th century, a semi-educated class of people began to expand in Serbia, developing afterward into a highly educated class. A large majority of them obtained their education at universities across Europe, mostly in Austria and Germany, then in Switzerland, France and elsewhere. It was inevitable that this generation of learned Serbs carry the cultural influences of the *milieus* they studied in. New knowledge arrived, fresh opinions, experience, and customs. Serbia was rapidly changing, transforming from a backward Ottoman nook into a modern European society.

The very idea of national liberation and unification was an idea of West European heritage. The same applies for the idea on the creation of a nation-state. The concept of freedom, both individual and collective, is from Western Europe again. The idea on

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equality before law, rights of man and citizen, equal justice for all, liberty of thought, speech, the press and association, are achievements of the French Revolution over 200 years ago, which had spread across all of Europe sooner or later.

From the point of national culture, Serbia's course was also in line with contemporary Europe. It was said many times that Dositej Obradovic<sup>70</sup> was a spark of 18th century European Enlightenment, that Vuk Karadzic<sup>71</sup> was a shining example of Serbian early Romanticism. Thanks to the latter, Serbs developed a modern view of their past, albeit embellished, but ordered and complete. Serbian national memories, collected and recited in folk poems, would have been lost forever if they were not recoded, edited, and supplemented by Karadzic. The creation of the Serbian standard language and alphabet, transforming the vernacular into literary language, is the most significant national feat in recent Serbian history. This success alone released an explosion of intellectual energy that resulted in the greatest achievements in art and science

Exceptional works, in opus as well as importance, of Stojan Novakovic (historian), Jovan Cvijic (geographer and ethnologist) and Slobodan Jovanovic (jurist and historian), brought Serbian culture a step closer to its European model. In addition to this threesome come many other writers, scientists, philosophers and others. Regardless of the generation they were part of, they all shared a unique commitment: Serbian culture was part of the cultural family of Europe.

The shaping of the Serbian cultural model could not proceed without turmoil and resistance at home. Modernization was not embraced immediately and unconditionally. On the contrary. The Serbs' reaction against their own state administration and its demands was rather stormy and belligerent.

Internal differences and misunderstandings between rural areas and towns existed for a long time. The capacity of Serbian society was in bringing to the top the best of its offspring. As a

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<sup>70</sup> Serbian writer and philosopher from late 18th and early 19th century.

<sup>71</sup> The most famous Serbian writer, language reformer and historian from the first half of the 19th century.

rule, every generation of elites had a rural background, obtained an education in the West<sup>72</sup> and climbed to the next rung in society. Serbs had no aristocracy or privileged families. Pure peasant blood sent their talented young to the Serbian capital or abroad to study, and then upon return, formed truly national elite of them.

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The creation of a cultural model was not a single act, but rather a long-lasting process. The extent of the effort is best visible in retrospection.

It would be ideal for a historian to be able to assess the process when it peaked at a particular historical moment. But therein lays the main methodological problem. It is almost impossible to capture a process in a moment that would faithfully reflect the whole process. This especially goes for an extremely complex process with layers of different meanings such as the development of a cultural model.

With all the perils of such an examination, the years from 1903 to 1912 appear to be the most appropriate choice in the Serbian case. During that period, nearly all the elements necessary for the formation of a cultural model were met: a national state with constitutional and democratic order inside and a satisfactory international position (especially after 1906); effective political institutions and a developed public opinion; healthy national economy and balanced state finances; high educational and cultural institutions; social relations coordinated to ensure normal national life; national consciousness developed to an extent comparable with contemporary Europe; elite of supreme know-how and competence capable of leading the nation and determining its values.

So, what was lacking to make the Serbian cultural model completely shaped?

The answer is seemingly simple: A conviction of an outstanding national issue -- the question of non-liberated Serbian lands. The wish of Serbia to expand at the expense of neighboring em-

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<sup>72</sup> Very important institution in this sense was the State scholarship introduced in Serbia early in the 19th century.

## SERBIA IN OUR TIMES

pires and to assume a dominant position in the Balkans created cracks in the Serbian cultural model. The internal process of national enlightenment was always shadowed by an aspiration for national greatness. The aspiration inevitably threatened the flow of completing the cultural model. National unification required an armed force and national unity as the foremost precondition. And that in itself was not a cultural, but a national model. This caused further differences, leading Serbia to a clash with the Great Powers. Serbian territorial claims proved a nasty obstacle to the interests of the Great Powers. The Balkan wars (1912-1913), though glorified and ending with territorial expansion to the south, rang the alarm. And Serbs disregarded obvious signals. WWI brought empty victory and South Slavic unification (formation of Yugoslavia). The Serbs dangerously deluded themselves that it actually meant the creation of their centuries-long dream of a united national State. Yugoslavia turned out to be anything but a common State of all Serbs.

*What is of utmost importance here is the fact that completing the cultural model had to be halted in order to fulfill the national model (liberation and unification of all Serbs). The two models, national and cultural, simply could not go hand in hand. One had to yield to the other. In the Serbian case the cultural gave way to the national.*

In Yugoslavia everything went upside down. First political, then economic and social elements of the Serbian cultural model were gradually annulled.

The echo of intellectual accomplishments kept its resonance the longest. It reverberated after WWII for a short while, although the reverberation was a death rattle only to die out completely in the whirl of Communism.

Like a man who is beheaded and his heart go on beating for few more seconds.

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Serbian farmers were exposed to major trials during Tito's government.

Rural areas came under attack because they were not loyal and supportive enough of the Partisan movement and the Com-

munist Party. Draconian measures of the compulsory purchase of property followed, as well as the mass persecution of the peasantry. The next step was the agrarian reform and nationalization. The peak of the Communist policy against the rural population was the forcible transformation of farmers into industrial workers. Moving into industrial centers, young generations from villages left behind not only their old way of life, but also the patriarchal system of values. The "new man" invented by Tito's Communism was neither a farmer nor a worker. Cut off from his roots, he was systematically subjected to all kinds of influence. He lost centuries of tradition and economic independence, remaining partly tied to the remaining piece of land. This semi-worker-semi-peasant became the social pillar of the ruling order. The ideological mire of local Communism could be implanted into him without much resistance, along with the fallacies and untruths that Yugoslav Communism propagated throughout.

On the other end of the social ladder, a class of Communist *parvenus* grew. Comprised of privileged individuals and their descendants, this particular social layer soon captured the cities, thanks to the Communist revolution and the Party, moving into confiscated houses and apartments and adopting bourgeois customs and manners. Prone to tastelessness and snobbism, members of this privileged order flaunted their speedily acquired wealth and the habits they adopted overnight.

Among them were self-assured intellectuals, *parvenu* diplomats, regime officials, and so-called artists enjoying the Party's good graces, other hangers-on and sycophants to powerbrokers who saw themselves as the cream of the new Communist system? Their presence is noticeable even today.

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Decades of living in Tito's Communism developed among Serbs a completely different system of values, content of consciousness and mode of life.

This represented a totally new social pattern, based on the teachings of Marx and Lenin, but seasoned with qualities characteristic of the Yugoslav version of Communism.



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The question that arises is how could this Communist model be defined?

Communists first broke off any cultural connection with the West. In the early years, this break off was the most drastic. Every idea that came had to be from Soviet Russia, and indeed it was. Any contact with other parts of the world, even harmless, was uprooted and stigmatized. Everything of Western origin was declared capitalist and bourgeois and severely penalized.

After 1948, Moscow ceased being the exclusive source of all wisdom, but Communist purity was further strengthened for the purpose of showing ideological orthodoxy, in spite of differences with the USSR. Anti-Western sentiments were crucial elements of the new social model<sup>73</sup>.

Absolute obedience and bowing to the "directives" of the Party were another of its components. Sowing fear gave rise to a feeling of deep personal insecurity, a subservient mental attitude. Everything good came from the authorities: "The more you fawn over the authorities the better for you". Freedom of thought and behavior was undesirable: "Why would you want to get into their bad books"; "Why do you always have to say what you think, say nothing and you'll be much better off". Those were everyday pieces of advice and admonitions to people who did not understand right away what was actually happening.

People became less responsible, less aware of their individuality and their rights. All rights belonged to the Party and government that derived from it. In the grayness of mediocrity, every trace of autonomous individuality and its values was gone. People were transformed into a "collective", a kind of a military camp. Sometimes living in that camp was better, and other times it was worse, but that never depended on the individual capabilities or success, but only on proximity to the Party leadership.

The omnipresent UDBA<sup>74</sup> reigned; its eyes and ears spied on everyone and knew everything. The threat was constant and inevitable. Communists and non-Communists feared it equally, even

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<sup>73</sup> One must differentiate from this Tito's foreign policy based on a balance between East and West.

<sup>74</sup> Tito's secret police; The Yugoslav version of the KGB.

UDBA members themselves. Distrust crept into everyone, deliberately and methodically.

The idea of private property was wiped out completely. No piece of property was guaranteed or protected any more. Confiscation was relentless, without written proof, verification or right to complain. Then the assets were distributed anew, but along the Party lines and by political decisions.

Affairs were concluded by summary procedure, far from the public eye. Obsequiousness, obedience, acquiescence, compliance, loyalty to Tito and the Party, those were the most valuable traits that ensured social progress and status. The era of ability, know-how, originality, honor, integrity, and decency was banished as "bourgeois prejudices".

The cult of Tito's personality was developed on the model of Stalin's. A prominent Yugoslav Communist admitted once that although knowing as a physician that death was inevitable, he nevertheless believed that Stalin would live forever. Many people thought the same about Tito. On the announcement of his death, a surreal headline appeared the following day: "And after Tito -- Tito". This presumably meant that Tito was immortal and that his spirit would live on forever, defying the laws of nature.

Tito was proclaimed the first and the matchless. The greatest military leader, hero, politician, the greatest visionary. His name was put into the text of the 1974 Constitution and he was elected President and Party leader for life. He was described as the "greatest son of all Yugoslav peoples". His birthday (25 May) was declared the Youth Day and was celebrated even after his death.

This cult of Tito's personality produced an immature and rather puerile national spirit. It was as if the entire nation was placed under his patronage. This could perhaps explain the widespread grief and sorrow on his death. Most people felt lost and frightened without the "great master".

Titoism brought the following preconceptions.

First, former Yugoslavia was one of the most influential countries in the world. Its authority was respected in the East as well

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as West. The United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement listen carefully to what it has to say.

Second, the so called "self-management" was a superior political and economic system which combined the positive qualities of socialism and market economy. In that system people earned a decent living without working too hard. ("I can always work less than I am paid to work for"). The relationship between successful economy and deserved pay was understood by a negligible few. The majority was happy just to have employment; that was reason enough to "receive" pay. Expressions such as "receive pay" (instead of "earn pay") and "get an apartment" (instead of "buy an apartment") became common usage. The fact that the country borrowed heavily abroad was of no importance to anyone. Since no one was paying back loans in the country, why should the country pay back its debts to the outside world?

Third, a general climate developed spreading greed, envy and shamelessness. To have more than others, to boast and flaunt one's wealth before the poor became normal behavior as well as the acquisition of material goods by dishonorable means. Immorality, avarice, and craving power prevailed in public life. No one flinched from anything, nothing was sacred or untouchable. A mentality became rooted that permitted everything that brought personal material gain. Yugoslav Communism overturned old moral norms and relations between people. The general characteristic that it brought was social dissipation occasionally bordering on arrogant wantonness.

Fourth, the standards of labor and professional ability were totally erased. As a rule, diplomas and titles were acquired "through connections" and along "Party channels". Advertisements for employment, tests for school enrolment, grades, and examinations were rigged on a large scale and adjustments made flouting procedure. Those who did not deserve passed and those who qualified with honors were left behind.

Fifth, the Serbian literary language, written and oral, was marred by the eruption of ideological, empty phrases, poor education. Little remained of its former beauty. The fashionable use of foreign words became widespread. Provincialism and poor grammar of local dialects were respected as national authenticity.

Thus a new Communist vocabulary developed, awkward and distorted in every way.

Sixth, the image of the Western world did not change after the country opened up. It was comparatively easy to obtain passports, which allowed a particular social class to travel, but the only impact on them was a superficial influence of consumerism. Titoist middle class was not interested in anything of higher value.

Western influences reached Yugoslavia with difficulties, mainly through the so called "Yugoslavs temporarily working abroad". Those were people who decided to leave Yugoslavia find work and settle in Western Europe, while leaving their families at home and visiting them regularly.

That was pretty much the social model of Tito's Communism, however glum it might seem. Serbo-Communism only added a hideous and distorted image about the Serbian nation, its interests and history, keeping the rest.

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The Serbian idea did not suffer only because of the idea of Communism, but because of the Yugoslav idea as well.

Yugoslavism, unlike Serbdom, was not a national thought, but a political ideology. It developed in the Habsburg Monarchy in the course of 19th century. It reached Serbia in the early 20th century, gaining full swing during WWI.

*The most important thing here is that Yugoslavism stopped the historical development of the Serbian idea and led Serbs on a completely different course.*

### 3

*"A **revolution** is a fundamental change of political and social order carried out without legal gradualism. The basic change of institutions usually carries with it a change in values: Institutions are observed from a new angle and appreciated on behalf of new ideals".*

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This is precisely what the result of the event of 5 October 2000 was supposed to have been. But it was not.

The question is why?

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Before we search for an answer, we must make a few preceding remarks.

The first concerns the very notion of revolution. If a specific political system had been established by a drastic act of violence, as no doubt the Communist revolution was, could this system be changed any other way except by a new act of violence? In other words, is it possible to carry out a fundamental change of institutions and transform the nation from Communism into democracy and thereby respect the existing constitutional and political order?

The essential dilemma rises:

*Can a revolution be democratic?*

A revolution certainly cannot be carried out democratically, but it is feasible to expect that the consequence of a revolution could be the establishment of a democratic government. In the course of such upheaval, there is, of course, the danger of a new autocracy emerging. The leaders of a revolution are, no doubt, tempted to seize the power they took, as power is unrestrained during revolution, and thus become new dictators.

So says the theory.

However, every historical situation is a story in itself. Strict historical rules do not exist in reality. The history of mankind has regularities, yet numerous times events took a different path from the one that could have been envisaged in advance.

If the revolutionaries have a sincere democratic conviction, international supervision upon the revolutionary outcome and popular will for democracy -- which was the case in Serbia -- that threat is reduced to a minimum.

Such were the political circumstances under which 5 October 2000 took place.

The following are the two crucial features of a revolution are: the use of violence and the break with the previous regime.

Revolutionary violence need not be bloody, nor necessarily extend beyond a narrow circle of power-holders.

A complete split with the pre-revolutionary order is the gist of revolution, whatever view one assumes.

Another characteristic of a revolutionary act is to annul the institutions of the toppled regime. Right away, or along with this, a revolution builds a new institutional order. As a rule, it is not limited only to political institutions, but also impacts the economic and cultural spheres of public life.

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Thus it seems that examining the notion of revolution is not possible without value judgments. Its justification lies in its popular legitimacy, not the legal validity.

From a formal and legal point, revolution is invariably an act contrary to law. But, the law need not derive from the supreme will of the people. In fact, the law has not been the result of a freely expressed will of the people for a long time in history. It was the French Revolution that first established the principle of national sovereignty as the only source of legitimacy and government.

Communism overturned this principle giving all power to the "working class *avant-garde*", that is, to the Communist Party. Instead of the supremacy of the people, it imposed the supremacy of the Party and the social class which that Party supposedly represented. Furthermore, Communism did this forcibly, through the worst kind of violence: *Terror*.

Modern democracy is based on equality of people and their inalienable individual rights. The government arises from their individually expressed free will. Therefore, the conclusion could be drawn that freedom of man is in the core of democracy.

Contrary to democracy, textbooks say that Communism is founded on the collective rights of a particular class. The position in the "process of production" determines not only their rights, but their individual and collective consciousness as well. The

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"class struggle" is the inevitable law of the historical development of mankind. Modern democracy is nothing more than the political expression of the interests of the ruling class (class of proprietors) in the specific socio-economic system (capitalism). Only when the proletarian revolution seizes the "means of production" from the ruling class, abolishes private property, liberating workers from the shackles of exploitation, shall a truly free society be built. A capitalist state alone, not just the governing political system, is an instrument under the control of oppressors and therefore it should be stamped out so that all of society achieves the peak of collective liberation. Political freedoms do not exist unless there is economic equality. In systems where one class owns the means of production and another class is hired labor, there can be no economic justice, let alone political freedom.

This represents the essence of Marxist doctrine, in a very condensed form.

In reality, not only did Communism not bring a higher degree of collective rights, it put all power into the hands of the ruling Party oligarchy. That elite had a monopoly in organizing all forms of public and private life. Instead of the ideals of a free society that Marx dreamed about, a system of unprecedented non-freedom was born. It was based on sheer force and absolute power. The fall of Communism in Europe took place when the levers of power were no longer able to keep the population under absolute control. Eventually, economic poverty prevailed over fear of the Party.

*It was the countries with systems found on the principles of private ownership, free market economy, and representative democracy that carried off the final victory.*

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The event of 5 October 2000 in Serbia should have been a true democratic revolution.

The break with the old regime and its institutions had to be instantaneous and fundamental. The Communist system should have been abolished completely, replaced by the system of new democratic institutions.

A democratic revolution means that sweeping political, legal, and economic changes are carried out freely, regardless of current laws and norms, on the basis of democratic ideals.

Communism is incapable of self-transformation. It could not be changed gradually; it could only be overthrown with a single blow.

In the Serbian case, the first step had to be the suspension of the existing Constitution and urgent adoption of a new one, regardless of the procedure for the constitutional change. The new Parliament in which the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) enjoyed a two-third majority, could have declared the Parliament a Constituent Assembly.

The second step required provisional implementation only of those laws necessary for the state administration to function. The National Assembly should have passed new legislation at once, establishing the new democratic order as soon as possible.

The third step had to be the acknowledgment of the personal responsibility of the leaders of the former regime. A number of people from the toppled government must have faced criminal accountability for the evil crimes that Milosevic and his government had done to other nations and their own people.

The fourth step should have had to be purging the government apparatus of people who supported and abetted the old regime. The change had to encompass a considerably broader layer of officials of the ousted authorities and to sever all levers of the regime (administration, judiciary, state and public security, armed force, state companies and so on).

The fifth step should have abolished "socialist ownership" transforming it into private property, or exceptionally, into state-owned property. In addition to this, all acts from the Communist period that were harmful to specific interests of citizens should have been reviewed (rehabilitation of those unjustly killed or convicted, restoration or just compensation for private property confiscated by various means).

These are roughly the political measures necessary for a democratic revolution.



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The democratic revolution should have begun a process of comprehensive changes in the system of values, and start building a modern and democratic cultural model, as an achievement of a long-term goal. In this respect, the most important reforms should have taken place in education. Education in Serbia had to be cleansed of the Marxist and Titoist heritage and the influence of Serbo-Communism. In addition, it had to be adapted to the highest national mission: Educating the nation in keeping with the best of Serbian traditions and highest Western and universal ideals.

Regrettably, none of this took place after 5 October 2000.

Instead of a revolutionary intervention, the new leaders assumed the levers of power from their predecessors and continued to wield power in the order and spirit they inherited. The essence of the political and legal systems was not altered. Moreover, the political and legal continuity with the previous regime was enforced.

DOS had a special advantage that facilitated implementation of revolutionary measures. It won a landslide victory in the presidential, federal, and local elections in September 2000, and convincingly defeated Milosevic's party in the Serbian parliamentary elections in December. Thanks to this, DOS popular legitimacy was undisputed: a large majority expected revolutionary changes to be carried out and for Serbia to be transformed into a true democracy.

Milosevic's defeat and ouster were necessary, but not sufficient for the democratic revolution to succeed. Toppling one man, even one as powerful as Milosevic, could signify the end of one system and advent of another, but it could not be the essence of democratic change. There is no revolution without destroying symbols, but revolution cannot stop there. It would not be a revolution then, but a simple change of power.

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In political revolutions there are two key factors: the people and the leaders. It takes masses to get the event into full swing and give it democratic justification. But once the tide of revolu-

tion starts to rise, the leaders are at the helm, steering and setting the course of the revolution.

Thus it was in Serbia on 5 October 2000.

The people in Serbia wanted a true democratic revolution, but the leaders did not, dared not or were incapable of pulling it through.

The fact of the matter is that most of the DOS leaders were neither true democrats nor true revolutionaries. Those among them who were former Titoists or former Serbo-Communists had neither the knowledge nor the determination needed for a veritable democratic revolution. Some wanted to restore Titoism with minimal changes; others were seeking vengeance against their former boss. Those who did not belong to either camp were dazed by the fact that they had come to power. Instead of implementing the revolution, they agreed to act as a screen for masters who survived the Communist era.

Those few who really wanted radical reforms remained isolated or helpless. Their options were severely limited: To continue to change as much as possible in a restricted areas or give up everything and speak out.

Today it is safe to say that the leaders of 5 October failed the test of history. It was an opportunity that comes once in 100 years or more. All of them share the blame for the failure. Some reached the sky on the wings of power, others paid with their lives for the leadership of the revolution.

But what we can all regret is a missed opportunity. It is quite uncertain whether another chance will ever occur.

Until then, Serbia and the Serbs will languish in troubled times watching others pass them by.