

UDC 32(497.11)''1982/1992''(049.3)  
Book review

Serbian Political Thought  
No. 1/2012, Year IV,  
Vol. 5  
pp. 125-129

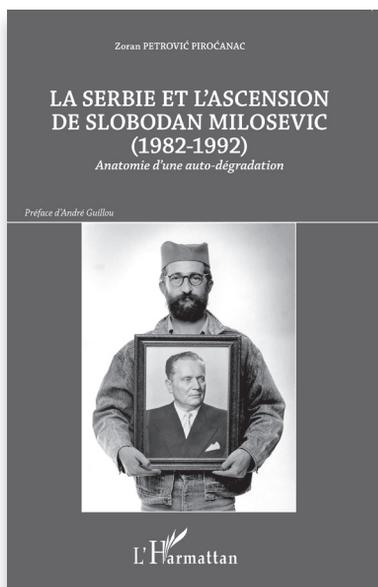
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## Book review

Zoran Petrović Piroćanac

*Anatomie d'une auto-dégradation La Serbie et l'ascension de Slobodan Milosevic (1982 - 1992)*

L'Harmattan, Paris, 2011, 302 p.



Ascension of Slobodan Milosevic (1982-1992) Zoran Petrovic Pirocanac uses contextual analysis in an attempt to elucidate the origin and evolution of an ideology from the territory of former Yugoslavia that led to an entry of a man into the political scene, the one who took the country down the path of disintegration. The author claims that the roots of the later Serbian crisis and self-destruction can be traced back to the way the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was created, but that definitely the geopolitical situation after the Second World War and the emergence of the Federation of Yugoslavia, with Serbia pushed aside, essentially determined further way for the disappearance of the state.

In his monograph *Anatomy of a Self-Destruction: Serbia and*

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Zoran Petrović's monograph has the primary aim to clarify the causes of the crisis in Serbia that started in the eighties of the 20th century, the consequences of which can be felt on its soil even today. The present study explains how the process of collapse of socialism around the world, on the one hand, and conflicts within the Communist Party of Serbia on the other, contributed to the establishment of Slobodan Milosević's system of rule. The author of this monograph simultaneously analyzes Yugoslav and Serbian perspective. The long-term crisis of "the Yugoslav model of socialism", the disruption of economic, social and political structures in the second Yugoslavia, the inability of national leaders to adequately respond to the crisis following Tito's death, has led to strengthening of nationalism in Serbia and other Yugoslav republics, where the crisis of the Yugoslav idea, and civil war culminated in the complete fragmentation of the country. The book is divided into three parts that together make a comprehensive analysis of the breakup of SFRY and the emergence of Slobodan Milosević's regime.

The first part "Yugoslav Communist Regime and the End of Yugoslavia, 1944-1991" deals with the origins of Yugoslav crisis. It examines the long process of enthronement of the titoist regime, characteristics of the communist model, such as the one-party

system, complete lack of parliamentary rules and pluralist politics, lack of democracy, the phenomenon of anti-politics, as well as the federal Constitution of 1974 which marks the true beginning of the Yugoslav crisis. This part of the monograph is rich with vivid analysis of the Yugoslav model of socialism, and particularly interesting is an explanation of the economic crisis that hit it, as well as detailed analysis of the factors that have caused irreparable economic disaster and failure in policy that led to the tragic collapse. The chapter "Blue Book and the Economic Crisis" should be especially noted; it deals with the period 1977-1978 in Serbia, with the Serbian side trying to start the process of redefining the Serbian state and its status in the Federation. The dissatisfaction of the Communist Party of Serbia was disclosed in a document called the "Blue Book" that represents an analysis of the economic and political situation in Serbia in the mid seventies, its problems with the autonomous regions of Vojvodina and Kosovo and Metohija in particular. This document, together with the Stambolic-Milosevic program of 1979, according to the author, is the inspiration for everything that Serbia demanded between 1986 and 1990. The "Blue Book" is little known, even in Serbia, and therefore has caught the author's attention. This chapter seeks to explain the rapid economic crisis

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in Yugoslavia at the end of Tito's reign and in the years following his death. Many years of "great indebtedness" proved to be fateful for the self-governing units of the Yugoslav federation in the early nineties of the 20th century.

In the second part of the monograph - "In Search for the Synthesis of the Serbian" the author is focused on analyzing the structure of the communist apparatus in Serbia, he emphasizes the role of its "coordinating bodies", "Marxist centers" such as the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and the Serbian League of Communists that represented bodies with real power. The author explores the attempts to modernize the communist apparatus after the arrival of Slobodan Milosevic at the helm of the Communist Party of Serbia, the role of the "old guard" composed of members of the communist structure of Serbian revolutionary generation. He presents the main players - Ivan Stambolic, Slobodan Milosevic and his wife-Mirjana Markovic. This part is rich with authentic information, as well as with detailed analysis of the communist government and the crisis that struck it in the eighties of the last century.

In the chapter "The Power and the Intellectuals" the author presents a repression of intellectuals in the seventies and eighties. Repression of free thought and art sheds light on Tito's regime and

reveals why the system actually crashed. This section also examines the case of the leading Serbian author Dobrica Cosic who became an opponent of Tito. Dobrica Cosic is a significant historical actor and a political figure in Serbia in the second half of the twentieth century that largely affected the Serbian political thought.

The third part of the book "Battlefield and the Beginning of the End" firstly analyzes the emergence of Serbian nationalism, and attempts to renew the Serbian state that had been put aside in the Federation. These phenomena are known in Serbia as "rallyingology", as well as mechanisms of fighting in the streets. Among other things, the author examines the "Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences" and the complex relationship between the Academy and the communist government, the beginnings of the problem of Kosovo and Metohija and the historical conflict between Albanians and Serbs - a key issue relied on by the Milosevic's policy until the late nineties.

In the chapter "Media, Truth and Manipulation" the author deals with events in the media in this period. Despite the fact that the media were strictly controlled, they began showing cracks in the communist system. A large space in this chapter is occupied by techniques of media manipulation.

The chapter "The War at the University Committee of the

League of Communists of the Belgrade University” needs to clarify the events that, according to the author, have been unjustly neglected by other researchers. Professor Mira Markovic was the chief ideologist, and later the driving force in making important decisions that have had serious historical consequences for people and the country. The University Committee of the League of Communists of the Belgrade University is the place where Milosevic’s takeover of power in Serbia begins. This is one of the key elements helping to explain the ideological conflicts of two camps- the one of Milosevic and the one of Stambolic. These conflicts were fierce, especially in winning the media. Special attention is given to the famous Eighth meeting of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia, analyzing it from different angles, before and after September 1987, the day it was held.

The two major political figures are in the focus of the researcher: Milosevic and Stambolic. Both were communist personnel but neither was able to take a position in accordance with the requirements of a new era with socialism in serious crisis. The author explains differences between the two longtime friends as different positions in the international policy - Stambolic’s orientation was exclusively anti-Soviet, while Milosevic leaned toward the Soviets. Ivan Stambolic had a soft

attitude. According to him Serbia was in an unfavorable position in Yugoslavia.

In order to achieve its political project, Milosevic-Markovic couple strategically chose the University Committee of the League of Communists of the Belgrade University with the dominant pro-Milosevic’s stream as the starting point. In the period 1986-1988 Ivan Stambolic was eliminated and they became the rulers of Serbia on three levels: at the University Committee of the League of Communists of the Belgrade University, the Belgrade City Committee as well as the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia. In fact, Milosevic and his wife studied the technology of Tito’s power very well. The basic contradiction of the Milosevic regime was the torment between their duties – maintenance of the ideological status quo and the inevitability of reforms.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the author of this monograph is a journalist by profession who enriched the study by using a number of specific sources: newspaper articles, valuable documentation of the RTS (Radio Television of Serbia), memoirs and testimonials of distinguished members of the Yugoslav political and ideological system. This work contributes to a better understanding of the Yugoslav crisis, its causes, dynamics, recognition of the political consequences it

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caused, not only at the territory of former Yugoslavia, but in the entire Balkan region, as well as in Europe.

The scientific relevance of this monograph is reflected in the fact that the author reflects on the rise of an ideology and the emergence of a personality who was one of the main actors in the dissolution of former Yugoslavia at the time distance of fifteen years. After the passing of time and after collecting plenty of authentic historical evidence that speak of the period covered by the study, the author was in a position to somewhat objectively analyze the Yugoslav crisis and causes that led to it, and to conclude that it was the communist ideology embodied in the Yugoslav territory in the form of the original model of undemocratic rule that brought to the surface Slobodan Milosevic, who, anchored at its helm, led the country into a tailspin.