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The main reasons that led to the dissolution  
of Yugoslavia and short explanation of failed  
project of the Yugoslav Nation.

Dr. Milos Bokic

PhD student at the University of Vienna, Austria

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## The main reasons that led to the dissolution of Yugoslavia and short explanation of failed project of the Yugoslav Nation.

*A short essay of one student which is written without any ambition to go into a deeper analysis of the political factors and politicians that had their smaller or larger role in the destruction of Yugoslavia.*

Dr. Milos Bokic

PhD student at the University of Vienna, Austria

## Abstract

The project of Yugoslavia has failed. The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has been broken down into seven new states in the bloody civil war in the beginning of the nineties of the twentieth century. Many experts were searching for the reason of disintegration of Yugoslavia. Was the authoritarian rule of Josip Broz Tito the main reason that was preventing the aspirations for breaking the Yugoslavia? There is no doubt that Tito through his political engagement did a lot on the creation and strengthening of the Yugoslav state and Yugoslav nation, which were supposed to be one of the pillars for building the supranational state. The Yugoslav constitution from 1974, which many have described as the basis for the beginning of Yugoslav breakup, was adopted while Tito was still alive. In addition to national tensions that were skillfully suppressed by the Communist Party, the economic factor also did not go in favor of the proponents of the Yugoslav state. Despite the strong post-war industrial development and modernization of the state, Yugoslavia was forced to take significant amount of money as a loan from the Western European countries. Inside the country itself, it came to a significant economic gap between developed west and poor east where people were living mainly from state financial aid. Further historical events, which resulted in the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the communism, caught political leaders of Yugoslavia unprepared. The idea of the United Europe and erasing borders between East and West, capitalism and communism, did not find its support in the Balkans. In the Balkans, the border was started being written with the blood of citizens who were sharing the same country until yesterday and became enemies overnight. The federal government has failed to respond to the new circumstances and all the weaknesses of the existing political system came to the surface. Despite the massive support of the Communist Party, the creation of the Yugoslav nation was not making progress as politicians have planned. Despite the positive aspects- common cultural roots, similar

language and same values, national conscience was a barrier to the creation of the Yugoslav nation that was too strong. Communist Party was trying to suppress individual ethnic identities and nationalities and impose the Yugoslav identity. Mainly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also in other parts of former Yugoslavia, the creation of Yugoslav nation did not achieve great success. The Yugoslav idea existed even during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, but they both suffered the breakdown at the beginning of the Second World War. Yugoslav communists were trying to build a strong state by placing the Yugoslav nation as a counterweight to ethnic tensions that existed in society at the time. Unfortunately, nationalist tensions escalated in the early nineties and it was clear that the idea of the Yugoslav nation experienced a collapse. The causes that led to the breakup of Yugoslavia will be the subject of further research and scientific debate. However, a large number of human casualties and terrible material destructions are the final result of an unsuccessful project.

## Keywords

Dissolution, Yugoslav nation, Nationalism, Yugoslav Communist Party.

## 1. The basic political principles on which the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was built.

The dream of nineteenth-century nationalism was that a common language, history, and habits of everyday life justified the formation of distinct nation states that would represent and protect ethnically homogeneous groups. In the twentieth century states have developed a variety of political mechanisms to accommodate national diversity within their borders, including legal recognition of minority, proportionate seating in legislatures, and policies favouring economically disadvantaged nationalities and areas <sup>1</sup>. In some states, integration processes that were conducted with the purpose to create the state unity have failed, primarily because of rivalries and conflicts among national groups within the state. To establish a new, ethnically diverse state it is seen as critical that the people adopt a common identity as citizens of that state, as members of a unified political system composed of groups otherwise diverse in language, religion, customs, ethnicity, or historical experience. In such states, however, there is a tension between ethnic or national groups wanting to maintain their own sovereignty within the state and the state's need to integrate such groups into a cohesive political unit that represents a shared ideology and vision of the future. The former Yugoslavia is state where the integrative processes of state identify formation have failed. Many of the underpinnings necessary to integrative processes were present in Yugoslavia, but they proved insufficient in the face of economic downturns and resurgent nationalist forces <sup>2</sup>. The basic questions we are seeking to answer in this essay are: What were reasons that led to the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and did the attempt to create a Yugoslav

1 Randy Hodson , Garth Massey, Dusko Sekulic, „ Who were the Yugoslavs. Failed sources of a common identity in the former Yugoslavia“, in *American Sociological Review* , February 1994 , Vol. 59 pp. 83

2 Randy Hodson , Garth Massey, Dusko Sekulic, op. cit., p. 84

nation serve as a barrier to the nationalistic aspirations of the peoples who lived in Yugoslavia or it was just a failed experiment of the Yugoslav Communists?

The basic political principle on which the leadership of Yugoslav Communists was insisting could be described as a society without national divisions. Yugoslav Communists reasonably believed that polity that will guarantee stability should not go in the direction of highly centralized national-state under domination of one nation, because this was one of the reasons of constant political tensions in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Politically this principle entailed establishing the federation of equal nations regardless of geographic or population size, while establishing a policy of centralism within the Yugoslav Communist party itself at the same time. The program of federalism was an important mean of winning support in post-war Yugoslavia. It allowed the League of Communists of Yugoslavia to orchestrate the creation of a new society that would, in time, transform the lives of people and lead to the replacement of politics based on national identities with loyalty and identification with the new Yugoslav state. Nationalism based on regional identities was also expected to decrease because of the geographic mixing of nationalities that had occurred during Second World War and because of increased mobility that was part of the process of urbanization and modernization being enacted by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia<sup>3</sup>. Tito and other leaders of Yugoslav Communist party were convinced that modernization and the growing industrial and economic development will weaken existing nationalistic tensions in republics. In this vision of the Yugoslav Communist party an effective educational system, geographic mobility between republics, increased communication and commerce were supposed to be the main factors which will be used to undermine the nationalistic ideas in republics. In the first decades of existence of Federal National Republic of Yugoslavia (FNRJ) the main power of decision-making was concentrated in the hands of Josip Broz Tito and the Central committee of Communist Party. Tito had the idea of policy that balances between the capitalist West and the communist East while trying to extract all benefits for Yugoslavia which were supposed to be reflected primarily in economic interest. The expectations of rapid economic growth that is evenly dis-

tributed throughout the state territory together with modernization of society were the basic elements on which Yugoslav communists relied in their policy, in order to strengthen the unity of Yugoslavia. Along with economic plans, Yugoslav communist party constantly worked on propagating of Yugoslav idea from which was expected to suppress nationalist tensions despite the existence of conflicting national identities.

3 Randy Hodson , Garth Massey, Dusko Sekulic, op. cit., p. 86



## 2. Main reasons for impossibility of joint cooperation between Republics and Nations in State of Yugoslavia.

Despite the efforts of Yugoslav Communist Party which were reflected in increased urbanization, reduced isolation of rural areas, constant improvement of the educational structure of society, industrialization of the economy and the significant development of agricultural production, along with constant political propaganda that was aimed to reduce the political strength of nationalism, problems with national tensions between nations and republics in Yugoslavia were still present. One of the main reasons for creating permanent national tensions in Yugoslavia was the fact that federal state was composed of several different ethnicities that were living mixed in their republics. Ethnicity is one of the features of a shared culture that encodes the bonds of solidarity that tells the embers of a collective what their tacit obligations are to one another, what they share and what they do not<sup>4</sup>. The solidarity that underlines ethnicity is the central element in ensuring that consent to the state remains in being. People who share an ethnicity also share an understanding of what is their community and what the metaphorical and physical boundaries of that state are or should be. Members of the same ethnic group do not seek secession, they will not have the group consciousness which could give rise to the questioning that might produce secession<sup>5</sup>. This problem became more pronounced in the seventies when leadership of Yugoslav Communist attempted to resolve it by adoption new constitution in 1974. Political solutions in new constitution from 1974 went in the direction of reducing federal jurisdictions by giving many of the prerogatives of

<sup>4</sup> Brad K. Blitz, *War and change in the Balkans : Nationalism , conflicts and cooperation* , Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 14

<sup>5</sup> Brad K. Blitz, *op. cit.*, p. 15

power of the federal government in jurisdiction of republic governments. The main goal that the Yugoslav Communist party wanted to achieve with constitutional reform was genuine decentralization of decision-making process but without mobilization of national groups. The plan of better realization of national rights through constitutional reforms brought the increase in jurisdiction of republican governments, so they could with their own decisions affect respective population and territory. However these constitutional changes did not lead to a reduction in ethnic tensions in Yugoslavia. The leadership of the Yugoslav Communists was incapable to rebuild a system that would give genuine expression to the ethnic reality in Yugoslavia and allow these realities within the complex federal republic under the communist hegemony. National identities were initially suppressed and Yugoslav identity was imposed in order to overcome the existing ethnical differences. Over time the strength of communist system waned, and ethnicity of nations that lived in Yugoslavia became more and more an important reference point in political tensions between the republics. One of the causes which will later lead to the disintegration of the state was the dictatorship of Tito. He was an important factor in the creation of Yugoslavia and during his rule he managed to keep the necessary cohesion and functionality of the federal state. When joining the Yugoslavia to the bloc of communist countries, in his political vision Tito did not anticipate the possibility of collapse of the communist system, and consequences of that collapse on Yugoslavia. He was not prepared to accept the basic weakness of the system that was created. It was clear that a moment will come when national antagonisms in the state will come out to the surface. Prediction that in one moment, when the communist ideology loses its dominance, various national communities in Yugoslavia will demand the independence, showed as an issue on which politicians of the Communist party had no answer.

The process of institutional reforms was finalized with enactment of the 1974 Constitution which established the official principle that the common agreement of nationalities will be a model for the further functioning of the country. Apparently the provisions from the Constitution of 1974 introduced certain contradictions in governance of the state, which have affected the policies of leading Federal Communist party. The idea of decentralization of Yugoslavia through federal structure in the political field has resulted in fragmentation of

Yugoslav political structure into six republic and two provincial Communist parties, where each of them had a monopoly over its own territory and veto power over federal organs decisions. Each republican Communist party quickly started to rely on traditional national goals, by putting them in limelight with help of other republican Communist parties. These tendencies were without effects during Tito's government, because the federal government was still in a position to suppress such „nationalist deviations“. After Tito's death the political centre lost the power to effectively suppress these republican demands. Political tensions that have arisen after the adoption of the constitution from 1974, and the policies of communist leaderships of republics that became quite complex, have led to a point when compromise on joint management of Yugoslavia was not possible. Expressing of the nationalist sentiments was allowed and even incited by republican political organizations. Old national slogans and traditional national divisions were receiving open support by intellectuals and other groups outside the communist party. Traditional national goals also quickly became parts of republican Communist party ideologies and strategies. Tito had to carefully balance between decentralization which was implemented and monitored by the Communist party and spontaneous national mobilization which gradually appeared and which was not controlled by the Communist party. The policy of creating a new nation also was performed according to the dictates of the Communist Party in order to suppress the political tension that could lead to a serious crisis in the country. Federalisation of Yugoslavia conducted under the party control was meant to satisfy aspirations for national autonomy and expressions of national identity. Communist parties in Yugoslav republics did not want to support traditional nationalist groups in their requirements for achieving national goals. Leaderships of communist parties in the republics were always in danger of being accused by the central government for contempt of state unity, if some of their political moves would assess as support to nationalist movements to play an independent role in the political sphere.

One of the causes which precipitated the breakup of Yugoslavia was a bad economic policy that was created by Yugoslav Communist party. In seventies but much faster in eighties, it becomes obvious that economic crisis was eroding standard of living, unemployment was increasing and many people doubt the prospects for a reversal

of economic situation. The main problem of Yugoslav economy was that there were no effective institutional mechanisms to arbitrate and settle differences between republics that had become in all but name independent states<sup>6</sup>. There was no sustainable way of coordinating economic policies of republics; financial stability was not the result of real economic parameters, so the currency was constantly losing its value. The economic transition to full market economy that was demanded by the international financial and credit-granting institutions implied a high economic expertise and knowledge which Communist leaders did not possess. The task of transition to full market economy could not be performed successfully because nobody wanted to accept responsibility for such hard work. In the 1960s, enterprises that were operating under the system of workers self-management were able to participate equally with competitors in the general economic boom in the West Europe. However, after 1973, in spite of massive export subsidies, the Yugoslav economy began to fall behind in competitiveness compared to the economies of Western European countries. The socialist way of managing companies that relied mostly on meaningless structure of self-management without responsibility for bad moves was producing high costs that were covered by the state in order to maintain false social peace. The state was forced to constantly debiting, which contributed to the constant rise of inflation and increase in the prices of products or their dearth. Summarizing the previously mentioned we can conclude that the political fragmentation of the Yugoslav Communist party, weak power of federal government and growing economic divisions between republics were the main reasons that led to dissolution of the Yugoslavia in the nineties.

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<sup>6</sup> Denis Bogdan Denitch, *Ethnic nationalism : The tragic death of Yugoslavia*, University of Minesota Press 1994, p. 11



### 3. Social factors which were used by the Yugoslav Communist Party in attempt to influence the process of creation of the Yugoslav nation.

After the Second World War, nationality was recorded in the decennial census, but there was no Yugoslav category. “Yugoslav” was first included in the third post-war census in 1961. Officially this category was reserved for “nationally no committed persons” and was treated as a residual category for those who offered no particular national identity. The modest decline in self-identification as a Yugoslav for the country as a whole between 1961 and 1971 was primarily the result of a decline in Yugoslav identifiers in Bosnia- Herzegovina (hereafter referred to as Bosnia) in 1971. High Yugoslav self-identification in Bosnia in 1961 occurred because Muslims refused to identify themselves with dominant national groups- Serbs or Croats. The 1971 census was the first to allow “Muslim” as a nationality, and many Muslim Bosnians switched from the “Yugoslav” to the “Muslim” category in 1971. Muslims in Yugoslavia, many of whom lived in Bosnia, were orthodox Slavs who adopted not only the Islamic faith, but also embraced many other cultural and linguistic features of the Turkish people who, during the period of the Ottoman Empire, controlled much of what would later become Yugoslavia. Apart from Bosnia between 1961 and 1971 and Kosovo, self-identification as a Yugoslav shows a general pattern of increase from 1961 to 1981, especially in Croatia and the Vojvodina, and in Bosnia between 1971 and 1981. Among the republics and provinces, Kosovo showed the lowest Yugoslav identification in 1971 and 1981, with most people in Kosovo identifying them as either Albanian or Serbian<sup>7</sup>. Data of one statistical research conducted in the republics of Yugoslavia in period of 1985-1989 measured self-identification by answers to a question asking the respondents’ national identification.

7 Randy Hodson , Garth Massey , Dusko Sekulic, op. cit., p. 84

Most people answered Croat, Serb, Muslim, or some other nationality or ethnicity. In 1985 in Croatia, 10.6 percent of respondents responded “Yugoslav”, but by 1989 this figure had dropped to 9.0 percent. In 1989 in Bosnia, the level of Yugoslav self-identification was more than 50 percent higher than in Croatia (14.4 percent), while in Serbia it was about 50 percent lower than in Croatia (4.6 percent)<sup>8</sup>. Heterogeneity of nationalities within the republic or provinces was one of the factors that contributed to the increasing percentage of Yugoslav identification. Contact between different nationalities is much more common in heterogeneous environments and results in the greater social connection of people and increase in number of mixed marriages. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Vojvodina were the former Yugoslavia’s most nationally diverse areas, and both provinces had larger than average number of people identifying as Yugoslavs.

There are several different factors that we need to analyse so we could better understand the attempt of creation the Yugoslav nation. Modernization of the state was one of the main factors that should contribute to creation of new national identity. From the growing urbanization and the increasingly significant progress in the education of the population, communist regime was expected to diminish the existence of differences in national identities and also to increase contacts between citizens with different national identities inside the state. Industrialization had produced an increasing mobility of the population who have moved from the rural and undeveloped parts of Yugoslavia to the cities and industrial areas of the state. This massive settlement of population also led to creation of entirely new urban settlements where the inhabitants were with different national origins. Inhabitants of city parts created in this way, in order to minimize cultural barriers and differences, declared themselves as Yugoslavs which was consequence of existing social relations among individuals who had different national backgrounds. The effects of urbanization and adaptation of new city inhabitants to life in cities had significant influence in overcoming the national differences and helped in the creation of the Yugoslav identity. Increase in civic awareness along with the growth in education appears to have great influence on creation of new social

8 Randy Hodson , Garth Massey, Dusko Sekulic, “National Tolerance in the Former Yugoslavia”, in *The American Journal of Sociology*, May 1994, Vol. 99 (No. 6), p. 1550



identity, which helped in overcoming national differences and creating a stronger unity in Yugoslav society. This process gradually weakened under the impact of the economic crisis and the growing problem for highly educated people to find job in seventies and eighties.

Yugoslav Communist party believed that unity of the all nationalities in the federal republic could be achieved over the ideological activities. Ideological and propaganda activity had its origins back in war period and continued with glorification of partisan heritage after war, where the Communist Party had a leading role. One of the factors in which Yugoslav Communists put their hope in process of creation Yugoslav national identity was political participation in the Communist party. Although Yugoslav Communist leaders were expecting that participation in the political system of Yugoslavia, especially in Communist party, will increase the acceptance of Yugoslav identity- in reality it was not so efficient. For the great majority of common people such as workers and peasants, the membership in the Communist party did not provide an elite status. Communist officials who held elite positions enjoyed the privileges that were not enabled to other members of Communist party. This was one of the reasons for weaker political activity in the eighties. Data of one statistical research conducted in the Yugoslav republics in period of 1985-1989 year show that party membership increases Yugoslav self-identification most in Croatia, less in Bosnia, and in Serbia it has no effect at all. The difference between Croatia, where party membership more than doubles the likelihood of identifying as a Yugoslav, and Serbia, where it has no effect at all, is statistically significant at the 0.05 level <sup>9</sup>.

Considering the historic connection and permanent migration of people that existed through the history between the Yugoslav republics, it was expected that demographic factor will be very important in creation Yugoslav identity. Yugoslav self-identification was especially important for the children of nationally mixed marriages, because this was way to overcome the problem of national declaring of the child. Many people declared themselves as Yugoslavs because they wanted to resist the pressure which the community could put on their national identity and in that way avoid a potential conflict. Yugoslav identity

<sup>9</sup> Randy Hodson ,Garth Massey ,Dusko Sekulic, National Tolerance in the Former Yugoslavia, op. cit., p. 1550

also provided, especially for younger persons, possibility of distancing from national divisions; it was a way of protest against traditional nationalist politics that was in the heart of the region's problems. The status of the national minorities, which was a serious issue in Yugoslavia, often was used by Yugoslav Communists with intention to establish a stronger connection of Yugoslavian self-identification. Members of national minority accepted Yugoslav identity as a way to resist pressure from the majority and assimilate into the local dominant nationality. Serbian nationalists often interpreted Yugoslav identification of the Serb minority living in Croatia as a defensive response to unfavourable treatment by the Croat majority. Croatian nationalists had the same arguments on behalf of Croats in the province Vojvodina. The concept of Yugoslav identity as a defensive strategy for minority nationalities was the most expressed in the regions that were ethnically mixed, mostly in Bosnia less in Croatia and Serbia. Serbs were numerically, politically, and militarily dominant in the former Yugoslavia and it appears that they did not feel such a strong need to identify with Yugoslav identity, whether they lived inside or outside Serbia. Croats, by contrast, when living outside Croatia, were likely to take on the more neutral and defensive posture of identifying as Yugoslavs. The higher level of Yugoslav identification that existed in ethnically-mixed Bosnia than in homogenous republics Croatia or Serbia gives further explanation to the understanding of Yugoslav identity as a defensive strategy for minorities. By accepting of Yugoslav identity people wanted to avoid the process of assimilation by the majority population or labelling themselves as a minority group.

Taking into consideration results from census conducted in 1961, 1971 and 1981, only a relatively small proportion of people in the former Yugoslavia accepted the Yugoslav identity. Communist leaders had a vision of the Yugoslavia as a multinational state which was based foremost on the common historical heritage and geographical proximity of the population that lived in the Balkan Peninsula. Although Yugoslav identity was based on common language and on similar cultural forms, historical differences that existed were an insurmountable barrier for its significant acceptance. Yugoslav experience showed that industrialization, and social transformation that follows it, can contribute to greater universalism and acceptance of ethnic and national differences. It was expected that general effects

of greater number of mixed marriages and higher political participation will achieve equally good results in increasing tolerance as well as process of industrialization of country and education of society. Within the social and political relations in society the Communist party tried to accomplish influence with intention to increase the percentage of people willing to accept Yugoslav identity. Efforts were primarily focused on the urbanization of country, relations between different nations, and higher political participation, although Communist Party itself was ambivalent about the way of promoting a Yugoslav identity. It will remain unknown, if these forces had sufficient time, would they ever have created a strong collective identity for the citizens of the former Yugoslavia as members of a unified nation-state. While this failure to establish a shared identity among the people of this region cannot be said to explain the disintegration of Yugoslavia, it is apparent that a shared identity was not much in evidence as a mediating mechanism sustaining Yugoslavia through difficult transitions or slowing its disintegration into warring national camps <sup>10</sup>. The whole experience with issue of Yugoslav identity suggests that the path to a shared identity of one society, either through political activities or through industrialization and development, is neither simple nor certain. When the power of the Yugoslav Communist party at the federal level diminished, it was clear that gradual abandonment the idea of state unity and the creation of bastions of regional political strength must happen. Anticipating that the Yugoslavia end will come soon, Communist leaders began to change their rhetoric, so they decided to replace the ideas of Yugoslavism, brotherhood and unity with the nationalist slogans.

<sup>10</sup> Viktor Meier, *Yugoslavia a history of its demise*, Routledge, 1999, p. 11

## Conclusion

The idea of Yugoslav Communist leaders that Serbs, Croats and Slovenians are just tribes, and that the Communist party with its ideological activity will provide the foundation of new unique nation, was the characteristic for the period of existence of FNRJ until 1963. Yugoslav Communists wanted to avoid repeating the instability that was present in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and which had a root in a political conflict primarily between Croats and Serbs. Tito and the Yugoslav Communists wanted to avoid potential political conflict in society giving strong support to process of industrialization and modernization, hoping that through the successful implementation of these processes they could suppress ethnic and political intolerance which existed previously. Many of changes associated with modernization and increasing level of education contributed to the greater tolerance in Yugoslav society. There were other aspects of modernization that affected the potential inter-ethnic tensions in society and conflicts that contributed to the political instability. These contradictory consequences of modernization were a reason for the expression of dissatisfaction in Yugoslav society, whose roots were much deeper and primarily based on theory of national inequality. Solutions which Yugoslav Communists wanted to apply in order to ensure functional existence of Yugoslavia were: the federal organization of the state, equal rights to all nations and a vision that in future with communist propaganda and successful economic development finally all national divisions will lose in importance. But federal arrangement of the state and decision-making process at the federal level, which was regulated by the federal constitution of 1974, was ineffective. For adoption of the major economic and political decisions it was necessary to accomplish consensus of the republics and the autonomous provinces. Inside Yugoslavia there was a gap between developed and undeveloped republics. It was very hard, if not impossible, to achieve a consensus between the “de-

veloped” republics and provinces (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia without Kosovo, Vojvodina) and those that were “undeveloped” (Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo). This consensus was difficult to achieve, especially when talking about the crucial issues on economic and political reforms and the restructuring of industry and its absence in the last two decades has led to a significant deterioration in the functioning of the state. Economic, social, political and other problems were not solved, and political crisis became more complicated, especially after the collapse of the economic reforms announced in the 1960s and the suppression of “liberal tendencies” at the beginning of the 1970s. An unsuccessful economic policy, so called “agreement economy”, had been introduced as the basis for market operation, which led to the abolition of market laws and legal obligations between economic entities. It was obvious after the ever-worse economic situation in 1980s, with the debt crisis which caused stagnation and decline in market production, that a major overhaul of the whole political and economic system was necessary. The economic crisis of the 1980s was an important catalyst for the disintegration of the union-living standards declined by at least a quarter, and inflation reached more than 2,500 percent in 1989<sup>11</sup>. Yugoslav Communist leaders were unwilling to admit the existence of serious problems in functioning of the country. The one-party regime did not provide opportunities for genuine corrections and serious reforms of the political and economic system. The legitimacy of the Yugoslav Communist party was openly brought into question, and most Yugoslavs wanted radical changes or abandoning of the system of worker self-management that had been the hallmark of post-war Yugoslavia. Yugoslav government unsuccessfully tried to keep the central power in state. Governance of the state became very complicated and political leaderships of the republics were not able to find a common interest for further existing of Yugoslavia. The Party leadership was unable to deal with the situation, and when they finally recognised and accepted that the crisis was serious, the leadership had showed incapable of reforming itself at the federal level, and adapt to the new political processes that took place in the world. The main political conflicts in Yugoslavia were intra-party conflicts between members of Communist party from the different re-

11 Silvio Devetak, *The dissolution of multi-ethnic states: The case of Yugoslavia*, United Nation University Press 1996, p. 88

publics and provinces. The disintegration of Yugoslav Communist party was leading directly to the disintegration of the state Yugoslavia. The fact that so many occasions and opportunities for fundamental reform were missed or only very partially pursued simply produced an accumulation of problems, systematically neglected, and therefore running increasingly out of control. It was hardly surprising when the pressure for change built up and broke through at the level of the republics<sup>12</sup>. The collapse of the Yugoslavia was primarily a logical consequence of political actions taken by their own political elite, which had not been able to agree on common interest that was required so the state could continue to function efficiently.

The policy of Yugoslavia’s leaders, at least as far as the national question, was conducted both expedient and prudent. By emphasizing economic development, workplace democracy, economic and gender equality, tolerance for national differences, and equal legal rights of all citizens, Tito and League of Communists of Yugoslavia assumed that time was on their side and that the crises the state would inevitably face could be cast in other than nationalist terms<sup>13</sup>. Yugoslav state policy of modernization, urbanization and controlled nationalism maybe has led to the greater tolerance, but also has set the stage for the mobilization of groups around national issue, especially in ethnically diverse and highly autonomous republics. The political concept of Yugoslavism promoted by the Yugoslav Communist party was devised with the aim to overcome differences in national identities. What everybody already knew, but the few people had courage to admit in the early nineties, except the name of the state the only forms that still had the prefix Yugoslav were the Yugoslav National army and sport representations. The economic crisis of the eighties and the attenuation of influence of the Federal Communist party were giving a new life to political ideas which were based on the nationalism. Failure of the system produced not only distrust between people of different nationalities, but also created such political situation in which nationalistic motivated individuals succeeded to link the existing dissatisfaction of the people with national differences and historical resentments. In the

12 Ivan Vejvoda, “Why did the war happened?“, in Miroslav Hadzic (ed.) *The Violent Dissolution of Yugoslavia: Causes, Dynamics and Effects*, Belgrade Center for Security Policy, 2004, p. 68

13 Randy Hodson, Garth Massey, Dusko Sekulic, op. cit., p. 96

absence of the other forms of the political linking, nationalistic ideas became the most suitable means for winning a significant political support. Newly emerging leaders and former Communist Party leaders promoted nationalist pride and offered solutions marked by cultural atavism and sometimes by a desire to emulate more affluent nations<sup>14</sup>. Constant tension between federal authorities and republic authorities on Yugoslav political scene at the end of the eighties produced a situation where every trivial issue in functioning of the state got ethnic or national connotation. Yugoslav political elite was guilty because it allowed that nationalist sentiments become substitute for political arguments. In the situation where feelings overcame the reasonable thinking, the only logical solution was breakdown of Yugoslavia followed by large number of human victims mostly civilians and the horrible material destruction.

14 Dejan Jovic, *Yugoslavia : a state that withered away*, Purdue University Press 2009, p. 23

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## Author

Milos Bokic,


Milos was born on 21.07.1983 in Novi Sad, Serbia. In 2009 he finished bachelor studies at law faculty on the University of Novi Sad, Serbia. In 2010 he successfully defended his master thesis at law faculty on the University of Novi Sad, Serbia. After finishing master studies he enrolled PhD studies on the University of Vienna. Currently performing an internship in the High Court in Novi Sad.

Email: [bokicm@neobee.net](mailto:bokicm@neobee.net)




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You can contact her for proposals and submission of scientific contributions for the Scientific Library (under the blind peer review). You can contact her for information about Newsletter, general requests, conferences and events, academic calls, communications concerning cultural and eco-tourism.

[luciana.moretti@unibo.it](mailto:luciana.moretti@unibo.it)

### Mr Andrea Gullotta

He contributes to Pecob's Scientific Library, particularly with the "Papers, essays and articles in Language, Literature and Culture on Central Eastern and Balkan Europe.

[andrea.gullotta@unive.it](mailto:andrea.gullotta@unive.it)

### Mr Michele Tempera

Is responsible of the Business Guide Section. You can contact him for communications concerning the economic and business section and for the Informative Area issues.

[michele.tempera@unibo.it](mailto:michele.tempera@unibo.it)

### Ms Elvira Oliva

Is responsible for the Energy Policy Studies branch of the Portal. You can contact her for submitting requests and to obtain information about the Energy policy Study section.

[elviraoliva@libero.it](mailto:elviraoliva@libero.it)



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# PECOB



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