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Yugoslav Politics in the 1980s from the Perspective of Boris Mužević and Other Former Slovenian Communists

Abstract: The paper reviews the recently published diary of Boris Mužević and earlier memoirs of former Slovenian communist officials. Along with selected archival sources, this literature is used to discuss the role of Mužević and his Slovenian colleagues in the events that preceded the breakup of Yugoslavia. In particular, the attention of the Slovenian politicians was moving from ideological to statehood issues over the period 1985–1989, while Mužević actively participated in escalation of conflicts in the Yugoslav communist leadership.

Keywords: Yugoslavia, Slovenia, League of Communists, 1980s

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) ceased to exist more than thirty years ago. In this regard, the testimonies of the main actors of the events that preceded the dissolution of the federation do not come out very often anymore. One of the relatively recent ones was a reportage from the highest echelons of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (*Savez komunista Jugoslavije*, SKJ), in which a former employee of the Party apparatus, Andrija Čolak, recounted the explosion of nationalism-laden conflicts within the political elite in 1988–90.¹ The preface to the Slovenian edition of this book was written by Boris Mužević (born 1949), who as a representative of the Slovenian Party organisation was one of the executive secretaries, and later a full mem-

1 Andrija Čolak, *Razpad Jugoslavije. Agonija ZKJ in zadnji dnevi socialistične države*, (Mengeš: Ciceron, 2015). Later published also in Serbia as *Agonija Jugoslavije. Kako su posle Titove smrti republički lideri dokrajčili Jugoslaviju*, (Beograd: Laguna, 2017).

ber of the Presidium of the SKJ Central Committee. Later in 2021, Mužević published his own report on the functioning of the same body.² There is a large overlap in content between the books by Mužević and Čolak, since both participated in the same meetings of the leadership of the ruling political organization at the end of its existence. These two books are connected by their predominantly diaristic nature, which increases their relevance. Unlike Čolak's, however, Mužević's diary begins as early as 1985, and thus covers also a period before the acute statehood crisis of the SFRY. Hence, Mužević provides an insight of how futile ideological debates among the top Yugoslav communists turned into fierce contests over the political being and non-being of individual politicians and over the fate of the entire state and its parts. During those years, some members of the Party Presidium took the lead of their respective nations towards the final resolution of the Yugoslav crisis.

Before Mužević, some other communist officials from Slovenia from the late socialist era had published their memoirs, including Franc Šetinc,³ Jože Smole,⁴ Miran Potrč⁵ and Zvone Dragan.⁶ Their memoirs are heavily burdened by selective recall and subsequent revision of their previous work and its context. Former members of the political elite made obvious efforts to distance themselves from their own pro-Yugoslav and communist past, especially in books published in the early 1990s. In this context, the small but significant changes that the memoirs of Šetinc underwent between the first and second edition (1989 and 1993) are symptomatic. While in the first edition (when Yugoslavia and SKJ still existed) we find nothing to suggest that the author was convinced of the inevitability of the break-up of the federation, in the second edition Šetinc writes that he had already bid Yugoslavia farewell during his official trip to Kosovo in 1988.⁷ Some passages that (in)directly indicated Šetinc's identification with Yugoslavia and socialism during the 1970s and 1980s also disappeared in the second edition. Thus, we no longer encounter the reminiscence of his own belief from the 1970s about the future of self-government as "the end of the world of the gods",⁸ and the idea of approximating the conver-

2 Boris Mužević, *Z dežja pod kap in nazaj. Ljubljana–Beograd–Ljubljana 1985–1990*, (Ljubljana, Sophia, 2021).

3 Franc Šetinc, *Vzpon in sestop*, (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1989); Franc Šetinc, *Zbogom, Jugoslavija*, (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1993).

4 Jože Smole, *Pred usodnimi odločitvami*, (Ljubljana: Delavska enotnost, 1992).

5 Miran Potrč, *Klic k razumu. Spomini*, (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2014).

6 Zvone Dragan, *Od politike do diplomacije*, (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2018).

7 Šetinc, *Zbogom, Jugoslavija*, 325.

8 Šetinc, *Vzpon in sestop*, 143.

gence of school curricula throughout the Yugoslav republics was no longer “good” but only unifying in the later narrative.⁹ In stark contradiction to the nature of his long-term political activity, after 1990 Šetinc assesses the post-war communist efforts to build a multi-ethnic federation as having been vain in advance. In fact, he sees the seeds of discord in the very formation of Yugoslavia in 1918, as the “uncivilized” Serbs had the upper hand.¹⁰ Since it is clear that Šetinc was well aware of the circumstances of the formation of Yugoslavia while he was a communist politician, he does not try to hide the fact that he looks at history in a new way. He says he realized this thanks to Slobodan Milošević’s rally campaign in the late 1980s (the so-called anti-bureaucratic revolution).¹¹ In contrast to Šetinc, Miran Potrč and Zvone Dragan, already with a greater time distance, were able to confess to a belief in self-managed socialism during their political life.¹² In addition, Potrč did not forget his positive feelings related to the Yugoslav identity: regret at Tito’s death, pride in the position of president of the Yugoslav trade unions, and emotions at the mutual visits of Slovenian and Serbian families by the so-called “train of brotherhood and unity”, a remembrance of the Serbs’ help to tens of thousands of Slovenes while they had been in exile in southern Serbia during the Second World War.¹³

Milan Kučan, as the most important protagonist of the ideological transformation of the Slovenian communists, did not publish his memoirs. However, some of Kučan’s later views on the events of the end of Yugoslavia can be found in his biography by Božo Repe¹⁴ and in numerous interviews for the media.¹⁵ Kučan’s reflections combine two basic interpretations of the reasons

9 *Ibid*, 188. Šetinc, *Zbogom, Jugoslavija*, 46.

10 “It was fatal that the leading role [in 1918] was taken by Serbia, with 65.4% of the population illiterate, which until then had been ruled by a policy of ‘mutual extermination of two dynasties hostile to each other to death’ under the slogan: kill or be killed”. *Ibid*, 5-6.

11 *Ibid*.

12 Potrč, *Klic k razumu*, 87; Dragan, *Od politike do diplomacije*, 44.

13 Potrč, *Klic k razumu*, 74, 95.

14 Božo Repe, *Milan Kučan – prvi predsednik*, (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2015).

15 Omer Karabeg, „Milan Kučan: Otpor srboslaviji“ (interview with Milan Kučan). *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, 27. 2. 2008, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/1045269.html>. Dušan Telesković, „Mi smo znali da SKJ ne shvatamo kao svoju ako ne prihvate naše predloge. Hrvati nisu imali tu pripremu...: Velika ispovest Milana Kučana, 30 godina posle Četrnaestog kongresa“ (interview with Milan Kučan), *Nedeljnik.rs*, 23. 1. 2020, <https://www.nedeljnik.rs/...velika-ispovest-milana-kucana-30-godina-posle-cetrnaestog-kongresa/>. Dragan Štavljanin, „Prvi predsednik Slovenije: Kraj Jugoslavije je bio neminovan“ (interview with Milan Kučan), *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, 25. 6. 2021, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/prvi-predsednik-slovenije-milan-kucan-intervju/31313878.html>. Aleksandar Miladinović, „Slovenija i rat u bivšoj Jugoslaviji: Milan Kučan za BBC - Nismo želeli da

for the departure of the Slovenian communist elite from the Yugoslav idea: resistance to the pressure of the federal administration and the army, and later also of Milošević, to centralize Yugoslavia, especially from 1988 onwards, and the loss of Yugoslavia's *raison d'être* in changing domestic and global conditions. Here, Kučan refers to only vaguely outlined longer-term “processes” that he believes would lead to the disintegration, regardless of the current staffing of political positions.¹⁶ This perspective, summed up in Kučan's simple and truly Marxist statement, “History wrote me, not me it”,¹⁷ is a reliable obstacle to a deeper reflection on one's own role in directing the disintegration processes. Kučan *de facto* puts himself in the role of their somewhat belated executor. According to his memories, the constitutional status of the republic began to be perceived as a problem by Slovenian political leaders only with the onset of “extreme hegemonism and unitarism”, i.e. at the very end of the 1980s, while even in the second half of the decade “nobody had thought that Slovenia would secede”.¹⁸ Therefore, it may be surprising that Kučan, in his retrospect, does not see the disintegration of Yugoslavia as inevitable: “If [Yugoslavia] had been able to redefine the reasons for its existence in each new historical environment and justify its existence, it could have lived on to this day. But, it was not able to do so at that one historical moment”.¹⁹ Despite implicit references to erosion of the communist ideology as a cohesive factor in Yugoslavia in the form of the aforementioned “processes”, Kučan's later statements do not reflect his then-communist identity at all.

Compared to the standard memoir literature, Boris Muževič's book is far less influenced by retrospective corrections of his own views on the time he spent in high Yugoslav politics. The vast majority of the extensive work

naš cilj ostvarujemo oružjem, već razgovorom i dogovorom – nije uspelo“ (interview with Milan Kučan), *BBC News*, 7. 7. 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/balkan-57651325>. All websites accessed 19. 1. 2023.

16 “I don't think it [Milošević's arrival] has changed things significantly, because the processes have started. I go back to the fact that there was no longer any legitimacy for the survival of Yugoslavia. The processes had gone too far and alternatives were needed. It was necessary to think, what if I no longer recognise that country as ours, what then? I think it was logical that the alternative then was an independent state.“ Štavljanin, „Prvi predsednik Slovenije“.

17 Miladinović, „Slovenija i rat u bivšoj Jugoslaviji“.

18 Repe, *Milan Kučan – prvi predsednik*, 183, 314.

19 Karabeg, „Otpor Srboslaviji“. Similarly, in another interview, he speaks of the inevitability of the break-up, but in fact denies it: “Since there was not enough readiness, determination to apply the constitutional system of Yugoslavia, it [Milošević's accession] in itself naturally led to that logical break-up, which in my opinion was inevitable”. Štavljanin, „Prvi predsednik Slovenije“.

(667 pages) has been compiled by Mužević from his own notes of SKJ Presidium meetings. Excerpts from the contributions for the discussion of the author and his colleagues are accompanied by his comments, and occasionally slightly more coherent reflections appear. Unfortunately, Mužević opens the door to behind-the-scenes events much less. Thus, the reader will find very little information in Mužević's book beyond what is available to researchers in the Archive of Yugoslavia in Belgrade in the transcripts of discussions in the SKJ Presidium. This is somewhat disappointing. On the other hand, Mužević presents his own and his colleagues' speeches directly at the meetings in great detail. As a result, the book has a high documentary value and may help future researchers to get a basic orientation in the complicated Yugoslav political scene of the late 1980s. The book is written from the point of view of a politician who, from the beginning of his time in Belgrade, was one of the most conflictual protagonists of the events at the top of the SKJ, even compared to his Slovenian colleagues in the Presidium (these were Andrej Marinc, Mitja Ribičič and Milan Kučan until the summer of 1986, then again Kučan, Franc Šetinc and Štefan Korošec). Mužević does not try to hide this fact, on the contrary, he seems to be proud of it. He shows doubts about his own actions only when he *did not enter* a conflict, namely after hearing Milošević's report on the 8th session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia in September 1987, at which Milošević removed the followers of the rival current in the Serbian party elite from political life (p. 158). Otherwise, there is no sign of critical self-reflection.

Not all the topics of the meetings are given the attention in Mužević's book that would correspond to their relevance and prominence in the agenda of the Party Presidium. Much space is given to the Party's approach to the emerging alternative or outright opposition movements, and in the later period to the actions of the Serbian leaders. Mužević very marginally touches on the preparations for changes to the SFRY constitution in 1986–88 and the economy, although both issues were intensively addressed by the SKJ leadership. Mužević, on the other hand, must be credited with recounting the discussions at the Presidium meetings without major distortions, as far as I can compare them with the archival transcripts with which I am familiar. The diary entries also show no signs of major changes in retrospect, although possible removal of some parts cannot be ruled out. Thus, in spite of all the reservations, the work gives the impression of a relatively authentic source telling about the events in the SKJ Presidium and the author's thinking at the time.

Before 1985, Mužević held several political positions, but none of them were directly on Party ground. In the late 1970s he was a Slovenian delegate to

the leadership of the Union of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia and subsequently a member of the Presidium of the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Slovenia. In the Yugoslav version of socialism, both of these organizations were conceived as a kind of transmission of the ruling League of Communists to maintain influence in the broader non-partisan public. In line with the communists' intentions, these organisations were therefore less ideologically closed and, moreover, after the death of President Tito in 1980, they began to break out of the boundaries set by the ruling party. This process was particularly dynamic in Slovenia. In the first chapter of the book, Muževič briefly describes his time in the Socialist Alliance, where he was in charge of supervising the media in the first half of the 1980s. He points out the very blurred borderlines between Slovenian regime officials and critical activists, except the most radical ones. Thanks to his position and relatively liberal views, he found himself in a kind of grey zone between the two worlds. However, Muževič was logically closer to the system than to its critics. An opposition journalist later described him as a “mild censor” when speaking about early 1980s (p. 338). Muževič otherwise distanced himself from the Slovenian alternative scene at the time by his positive attitude towards the self-government system (pp. 16, 98, 470).

In the spring of 1985, senior party official, Jože Smole, on behalf of the leadership of the League of Communists of Slovenia (*Zveza komunistov Slovenije*, ZKS), asked Muževič to accept the position of one of the executive secretaries of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the SKJ. The executive secretaries (there were about seven of them), together with the 23 members of the Presidium, were supposed to participate in the preparation of various political documents and to discuss at the meetings of the Presidium, but, unlike the members, they did not have the right to vote. Muževič's election to a position in the Yugoslav Party centre came as a surprise to him, given his lack of any significant Party experience up to that point. Unfortunately, Muževič does not elaborate on the reasons that might have led the Slovenian Party leaders to choose him. He does mention, however, that even before him they turned (without success) to his peer Milan Meden, a journalist who in the following years, despite his membership of the Slovenian Central Committee, profiled himself as a critic of the communist rule. Thus, it seems that the Slovenian establishment for some reason wanted to send a member of the younger generation to Belgrade who was rather liberal and without close ties to the top politicians, despite the fact that the ZKS was headed by the relatively conservative Andrej Marinc. Muževič, in addition, had a persistent rebellious appearance and demeanour (pp. 33, 336).

Mužević moved with his family from Slovenia to Belgrade, which meant accepting education for his two young sons in Serbo-Croatian language. The fact that Mužević's wife was from Belgrade seems to have played a significant role in this decision (p. 32). Only fragmentary information is available on the family life, relocation or commuting of federal officials. From these, it seems that Mužević's complete move to Belgrade was rather uncommon in the 1980s. Serbian politician Dragoslav Marković, for example, complains in his 1979 diary that his federal colleagues from other republics stayed in Belgrade only from Tuesday to Thursday.²⁰ Slovenian historian Božo Repe also states that in the later period of the SFRY, officials were already moving to Belgrade mostly without their families and instead spent a great deal of time in their republics.²¹ Franc Šetinc, another Slovenian in the leadership of the SKJ in 1986–88, attributes this phenomenon specifically to Slovenian politicians who "rushed to Ljubljana every Friday". According to Šetinc, Slovenian officials were said to "greet themselves on the way to Belgrade, somewhere near Slavonski Brod, because they already imagined themselves returning home at the end of the week".²² The limited presence of federal politicians in Belgrade coincided with the gradual transfer of the centre of power to the republics, starting from the second half of the 1960s. This included also the ruling party, in whose Yugoslav headquarters each of the republican organizations had an equal number of representatives.

After all, when Mužević first came to a session of the SKJ Presidium in July 1985, he found that the present politicians were seated together with colleagues from their republics and autonomous provinces (Kosovo and Vojvodina). Therefore, he also sat down among the other three Slovenians (pp. 36–37). However, television footage from late 1988, when journalists began to be admitted to some SKJ Presidium meetings, shows that the seating was organised by function and alphabet: Mužević has another executive secretary, Lončar, to his left, and further left is Lolić; similarly, members of the Presidium, Lazaroski, Milošević, Orlandić and Pančevski, sit next to each other.²³ The alphabetical arrangement of the members of the Presidium in the meeting room is also directly mentioned by Šetinc, who joined the SKJ leadership a year after Mužević.²⁴

20 Istorijski arhiv Beograda (IAB), Lični fond D. Marković, diary entry from 15. 10. 1979. Thanks to Boris Mosković for letting me see the material.

21 Božo Repe, *Slovinci v osemdesetih letih*, (Ljubljana: Zveza zgodovinskih društev Slovenije, 2001), 9.

22 Šetinc, *Zbogom, Jugoslavija*, 246.

23 Programski arhiv RTS, Izveštaj sa sednice Predsedništva CK SKJ, 1. 12. 1988 (video record).

24 Šetinc, *Zbogom, Jugoslavija*, 12.

Perhaps, then, the seating arrangement changed in summer 1986, after the SKJ congress and with the arrival of the new Presidium? This possibility is indirectly supported by Mužević himself, when he says in his notes from October 1988 that the three Montenegrin members of the Presidium sat together “after a long time” (p. 262). This meeting took place at the time of mass demonstrations in Montenegro, which, with Serbian support, demanded the resignation of the entire Montenegrin leadership. Thus, in a moment of crisis, Montenegrin officials in Belgrade apparently stopped following the alphabet. The members of the Yugoslav Party Presidium were elected in their respective republics and many of them behaved accordingly.²⁵ The introduction of the alphabetical seating order could have been a part of their (unsuccessful) struggle against the gravitational forces that spontaneously clumped them into national teams.

Mužević declares that during his involvement in the SKJ leadership he was not and did not want to be instructed from anywhere, not even from Slovenia. After his arrival in Belgrade, for example, he had only “very sparse” contacts with Kučan (p. 47). In October 1988, at the time of the dramatic resignation of the Vojvodina leadership under the pressure of the so-called anti-bureaucratic revolution, Mužević was not happy when the entire Slovenian quartet, during a pause in the Presidium session, agreed in the office of Štefan Korošec on common tactics for the rest of the meeting (p. 256). A month later, he states that he had not been asking Kučan, who had meanwhile transformed from the mere Slovenian Party chairman into a true national leader, for his opinion, and that in Belgrade he had always acted “according to my conscience and reason” (p. 281). There is little reason not to trust this self-presentation of Mužević outright, even though there were frequent contacts (partly formalised) between key Slovenian politicians in Ljubljana and Belgrade in the 1980s. Occasionally, a narrow circle of about ten to twenty most influential Slovenian politicians (*politični aktiv*) met under the leadership of the ZKS chairman. According to the materials available in the Archive of Slovenia, these meetings in 1987 and 1988 were almost always attended by Stane Dolanc, a member of the SFRY state Presidency, and usually also by Korošec and Šetinc, but not by Mužević, among the Slovenian representatives in the federation.²⁶ In addition, the repub-

25 Already in 1962, Tito complained about the republican particularism of communist officials, including federal ones, at an extended session of the executive bureau of the SKJ Central Committee. Vladimir Unkovski-Korica, *The Economic Struggle for Power in Tito's Yugoslavia. From World War II to Non-Alignment*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016), 188–217.

26 Arhiv Republike Slovenije (ARS), fond 1589, SI AS, CK ZKS, Seja političnega aktiva 27. 3. and 30. 3. 1987; Sestanek političnega aktiva 28. 9. and 5. 10. 1987; Sestanek političnega aktiva 13. 10. 1987; Seja političnega aktiva 6. 1. 1988; Sestanek političnega aktiva 18. 1.

lican leaders summoned Slovenian members of the SKJ Central Committee to Ljubljana before plenary sessions of this forum. Muževič hardly ever attended these meetings either, although he was receiving invitations like the other 18 Slovenian members of the SKJ Central Committee.²⁷ While Muževič was probably not a member of the *politični aktiv* as a club of the most influential Slovenian politicians, his absence from the broader coordination meetings before the SKJ Central Committee plenary sessions can be explained either by his family life in Belgrade or by his reluctance to have to perform assigned tasks in the SKJ Presidium discussions.

However, Muževič's rather individualistic personality did not make him move closer to his colleagues from other republics. On the contrary, his attitudes were characterised by a lesser willingness to seek a Yugoslav consensus than those of Kučan, Šetinc and Korošec. Their cooperativeness was also decreasing, but Muževič was ahead of them. Thus, already in June 1986, he surprised the members of the Presidium by speaking of "civilizational differences" between the developed and undeveloped parts of Yugoslavia (pp. 69–70). This rather explosive concept had not yet been used by other Slovenian politicians in the federal bodies at that time. When Kučan, for example, spoke in a similar vein a year later in Belgrade, he still chose his words much more carefully, so that he could not be accused of being dismissive of the views voiced from the less developed republics.²⁸ Unlike his Slovenian colleagues, Muževič spoke also quite antagonistically towards Serbia and its efforts to limit the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina, even before open conflict broke out between Serbia and Slovenia in late 1988 and early 1989 (p. 213).²⁹

1988; Sestanek političnega aktiva 8. 2. 1988; Sestanek pri predsedniku prededstva CK ZK Slovenije 19. 6. 1988; Seja političnega aktiva v razširjenem sestavu 28. 8. 1988; Sestanek političnega aktiva 1. 9. 1988.

27 ARS, fond 1589, 29. seja Predsedstva CK ZK Slovenije, 23. 4. 1987; 38. seja Predsedstva CK ZK Slovenije, 14. 9. 1987; 51. seja Predsedstva CK ZK Slovenije, 24. 2. 1988; Razgovor s člani CK ZKJ iz Slovenije 9. 5. 1988; Razgovor s člani CK ZKJ iz Slovenije 27. 7. 1988; 65. seja Predsedstva CK ZK Slovenije, 29. 9. 1988; 74. seja Predsedstva CK ZK Slovenije, 9. 12. 1988.

28 "We have to take into account that different parts of Yugoslav society, within all the republics and provinces, are in different stages of development and that we have areas that are still in the pre-industrial phase, the majority are somewhere in the industrialisation phase and we have embryos, cores that are ready to accept and embrace the logic of a post-industrial society." ARS, fond 1589, Šk. 2702/61. Stenografske beleške sa 4. sednice Komisije Skupštine SFRJ za ustavna pitanja, 18. 8. 1987, 19/2.

29 See also Michal Janičko, "The Position of Slovenian Representatives in Disputes in the Leadership of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in 1986-1988", *Slovanský přehled* 1/2021, 132-135.

Otherwise, Mužević's individual positions were in accordance with the Slovenian leadership. This was initially manifested mainly in ideological disputes with the orthodox group in the SKJ Presidium around Stipe Šušvar (pp. 81–98). From there, however, Slovenian and Mužević's attention quickly shifted to issues of nation and state. That culminated in advocacy for changes to the Slovenian constitution in September 1989, by which Slovenia unilaterally limited some of powers of the federal authorities on its territory (pp. 493–520). Mužević shows some restraint only with regard to Slovenia's disputes with the Yugoslav People's Army in the spring and summer 1988, when he was surprised by the atmosphere in Slovenia and by the widespread belief that the army was planning a military coup in the republic (p. 220). Even in this case, however, Mužević did not disturb Slovenian unity at SKJ leadership meetings. This leaves no room for doubt that, despite his individualism, he clearly felt as a member of the Slovenian team in the Yugoslav politics. He says, for example, that by early 1989 he did not trust practically anyone among the Yugoslav non-Slovenian politicians enough to speak openly with them, except for one of the Croatian members of the Presidium, Ivica Račan (p. 387). At the same time, Mužević considered several other Presidium members to be close to himself in opinion (pp. 273–277, 645–651). Moreover, Mužević was occasionally getting angry even with Račan, when the Croatian politician joined in the criticism of Slovenia (p. 387). The example of Mužević also shows that, at least until mid-1988, the ZKS leadership, including Kučan, was lagging not only behind the Slovenian alternative scene but also many lower-ranking communists in terms of deviation from the Yugoslav orientation.³⁰

The issue of Yugoslavia's cohesion did not attract Mužević's attention before the dramatic events of 1988. There is virtually nothing in his speeches or in the accompanying diary comments throughout his involvement in the SKJ leadership to indicate a positive identification with the Yugoslav whole. On the contrary, in numerous diary glosses ironizes the concern of the unity of the country by the officials from other republics and from the army. Thus, Mužević uses quotation marks to distance himself from the defence of "brotherhood and unity" by Petar Šimić of the Party organisation in the army (p. 276). He treats the concern for "Yugoslav unity" among politicians from Bosnia and Herzego-

30 For example, Stipe Šušvar stated in the summer of 1988, after a visit to a meeting of the Slovenian Central Committee, that among its members, the then Slovenian national movement had wider support than among its leaders. Arhiv Jugoslavije (AJ), fond 507, CK SKJ, Neautorizovane magnetofonske beleške sa 82. sednice Predsedništva CK SK Jugoslavije 28. 6. 1988, 10/2.

vina in the same manner, and moreover attributes it to the multi-ethnic composition of that republic (p. 274). The absence of almost any sign of interest in the preservation of Yugoslavia, as we see in Mužević, was not common among Slovenian officials in the second half of the 1980s. Šetinc, for example, in his book from 1988, portrayed Yugoslavia as “a mighty tree from which strong branches grow”.³¹ In 1985 and again in late 1988, Kučan cited the most weighty argument among the cohesion factors of Yugoslavia, namely “common historical destiny”.³² In the summer of 1988, the President of the state Presidency of Slovenia, Janez Stanovnik, claimed to hold his “conviction that Yugoslavia is our common home [...] as long as I stand and do not fall”.³³ Mužević did not express himself in this way, and therefore even in the later passages of the diary, while he and the entire Slovenian delegation were leaving the SKJ, he did not face the need to deal with the Yugoslav idea personally. Initially, he also showed little interest in the Slovenian national question, but this changed during the deepening political crisis in 1988. The national aspect was effectively pushing aside his liberal democratic identity, which he otherwise presents as his main one. Such an attitude profile and its development were more typical of some groups of activists from the so-called alternative in Slovenia at that time, than of the communist elite. Considering Mužević, it can be hypothesised that a similar way of thinking may have had a wider representation among the educated groups of the younger generation in Slovenia.

From Mužević's diary we can get a picture of the development of the views not only of the author himself, but also of many of his colleagues in the SKJ leadership. Among the personalities who underwent a rather significant change during Mužević's Belgrade tenure is Milan Kučan. Mužević characterizes the role of Kučan while the latter was one of the ordinary members of the Presidium (i.e., until summer 1986) as that of a “waker from sleepiness” and an “initiator of the new” in the SKJ. On a number of delicate all-Yugoslav issues (including relations within the federation and the status of autonomous provinces), Kučan found himself in the role of working group leader and chief speaker (pp. 46–47), which indicated the trust he then enjoyed among the representatives of the other republics. As the years went by, Kučan, as chairman of the ZKS (and *ex officio* still a member of the SKJ Presidium), was *de facto* mov-

31 Franc Šetinc, *Što je i za što se bori Savez komunista*, (Zagreb: Globus, 1988), 242.

32 *Delo*, 2. 11. 1985, 4; Milan Kučan, „Jugoslavenski federalizam od Speransa do razmišljanja o novom ustavu”, Ciril Ribičič, Zdravko Tomac, *Federalizam po mjeri budućnosti*, (Zagreb: Globus, 1989), 5–17, here p. 17.

33 ARS, fond 1589, Magnetogram 61. seje Predsedstva CK ZK Slovenije 21. 6. 1988, 15/1.

ing to the position of Slovenian national leader. From its heights he told the other members of the SKJ Presidium in September 1989 that the controversial amendments to the Slovenian constitution would be accepted, otherwise the Slovenian communists would become quislings in their own nation (p. 496).

Mužević's observations on the changing attitudes of some members of the orthodox group within the SKJ leadership towards Slobodan Milošević are also worth noting. For quite a long time, Stipe Šušvar and Vidoje Žarković looked upon Milošević with sympathy. They thought that, unlike his predecessor Ivan Stambolić, he would more decisively fight the opponents of the socialist system. As a result, they both defended Milošević against even the hints of criticism of the 8th session of the Serbian Central Committee in September 1987, where Stambolić's group was removed from politics and Milošević subsequently took firmly power in Serbia (pp. 165–168, 212, 368–369). This attitude proved particularly short-sighted in the case of Žarković, who was driven out of politics in January 1989 by the anti-bureaucratic revolution, with the applause of Milošević. Mužević comments with satisfaction on the “Copernican turn” of Žarković and Šušvar in summer 1988, when the first pressure demonstrations against the leadership of Vojvodina began (pp. 227–241). When Milošević claimed at that time that he knew nothing about the preparations of these rallies, he was, according to Mužević, outright lying to his colleagues. This assessment of Milošević's actions at the time is also echoed by other than Slovenian actors.³⁴ During the anti-bureaucratic revolution, Milošević earned deep distrust of a large part of Yugoslav politicians, from which their relations have never recovered.

Indeed, after the 8th session, Slovenian leaders were already worried that Milošević had begun to use harsh methods and play the nationalist card.³⁵ However, they were careful not to raise the issue in the federal authorities more than was necessary to improve their image in front of their own national public – they did not want to set a precedent that could later turn against them.³⁶ In his memoirs, Branko Mamula, then SFRY Minister of Defence, states that the army initiated talks with representatives of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia on the implications of the 8th session. However, these re-

34 See: Raif Dizdarević, *Od smrti Tita do smrti Jugoslavije*, (Praha: Jan Vašut, 2002), 152–153.

35 ARS, fond 1589, Sestanek političnega aktiva 28. 9. 1987, magnetogram, 3/2–3/3 (Kučan), 5/1–6/1 (Dolanc).

36 ARS, fond 1589, Magnetogram 40. seje Predsedstva CK ZK Slovenije 9. 10. 1987, 33/2–34/1.

publics refused to interfere in Serbian affairs.³⁷ The Slovenian leaders, headed by Kučan, continued to act tactically in the first phase of the anti-bureaucratic revolution until the overthrow of the Vojvodina leadership in early October 1988. Unlike Šušar and Žarković, they then stayed out of direct conflict with Milošević.³⁸ Like the Serbian politicians, Kučan also resolutely protested against the possible imposition of a state of emergency in Vojvodina in defence of local institutions (p. 255).³⁹ Moreover, Šušar and Žarković already had not been looking at the events in Serbia entirely uncritically for some time, as manifested in their polemic with Milošević in May 1988 regarding the homogenisation of the Serbian public in support of the national leaders. The Slovenian members of the Presidium, who downplayed nationalism in their own environment in a similar way to their Serbian colleagues, did not enter into this dispute (pp. 215–216). Regarding Šušar’s campaign against the “bourgeois right” (pp. 112–118), Slovenes and Serbs in the SKJ leadership held very similar dismissive positions, as they did not want to confront the nationalist intelligentsia in their republics, which Šušar specifically targeted. Mužević also mentions Milošević’s radical rhetoric in support of the market economy, again in line with the Slovenes and in opposition to the more conservative members of the Presidium (pp. 120–122). Although Mužević devotes only minimal attention to the economy in the book, he gives no indication that the disputes between Slovenia and Serbia also concerned the economic system. It is another question how it came to be that Milošević, later in the 1990s, pursued in some respects an economic policy opposite to the one he had advocated until then.

The already highly conflictual atmosphere in the SKJ leadership was further aggravated in early 1989, when the anti-bureaucratic revolution culminated in the overthrow of the Montenegrin leadership. According to Andrija Čolak, the communist elites of the republics then split up, while they devoted the remaining year of the SKJ’s existence only to attempts to prove that “others” were responsible for the future disintegration of the joint political organization and the entire state.⁴⁰ The notes of Mužević strongly support such an

37 Branko Mamula, *Slučaj Jugoslavija*, (Beograd: Dan Graf, 2014), 131–134. Mamula also mentions the army’s attempt to have the SKJ leadership address the 8th session in November 1987, which is confirmed by Mužević (Mužević, *Z dežja pod kap in nazaj*, 168).

38 Janičko, “The Position of Slovenian Representatives in Disputes in the Leadership of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in 1986–1988”, 135.

39 See also: Čolak, *Agonija Jugoslavije*, 214–215; Dizdarević, *Od smrti Tita do smrti Jugoslavije*, 164.

40 Čolak, *Agonija Jugoslavije*, 26–52. Kučan was explicit in January 1990, when he suggested to the Slovenian delegates at the SKJ congress not to leave too early, lest they look like the

assessment, and also show the significant role of the author himself in the continuing degradation of the discussions within the SKJ leadership. In a situation where the Slovenian leadership was losing the remains of their interest in seeking consensus at the Yugoslav level, and where Mužević had been promoted to a full member of the Presidium (replacing the resigned Šetinc), he was given free rein to use his harsh rhetoric. He was particularly keen to launch invectives against his Serbian and Montenegrin colleagues. At one meeting, for example, he consciously (“mischievously”, as he puts it) decided not to refer to the present Stanko Radmilović by name, but merely by “comrade from Vojvodina” (p. 340). On other occasions, in his own words, he prepared an “arsenal of accusations” against Serbia (p. 503). The content and form of some of the verbal skirmishes with the participation of Mužević seemed childish. Thus, when Admiral Šimić, who on the other hand put himself in a somewhat parental role, admonished Mužević for his personal attack on Momir Bulatović, the Slovenian politician replied that it was Bulatović who “started it” (p. 442). Mužević was paid back by his opponents in the SKJ Presidium (Dušan Čkrebić: “you are saying stupid things”, p. 405), and even by Belgrade police officers who physically attacked him during a routine road check in August 1989 (pp. 445–461).

Mužević played a somewhat constructive role at the very end of the SKJ’s existence in the preparation of the theses on “political pluralism”. The topic reached the agenda in Belgrade in the first half of 1989. Most in the SKJ leadership already admitted that the communist power monopoly was over. At the same time, however, it resisted Western-style competition among political parties and instead tried (completely vainly) to invent “non-party pluralism”. Slovenian politicians, including Mužević and Kučan, were no exception (pp. 413–417). It was only in the second half of the year that they were changing their mind towards a multi-party system and thus got slightly ahead of the Yugoslav average (pp. 461–470). However, this was only a lead of a few months, while the far more serious gap between the republican leaderships concerned the national question. Thus, the Slovenian communists came to the SKJ congress in January 1990 with the ultimatum that the Party should turn into a loose union of independent republican parties. When this proposal failed to gain support, the Slovenian delegation left the congress, which was, like the entire SKJ, subsequently effectively dissolved (pp. 597–622).

Mužević’s book can be seen both as an account of the deterioration of relations within the political elite of the former Yugoslavia, and of the development of the author’s own attitudes. He was not part of the narrower circle

culprits for the Party’s disintegration (Mužević, *Z dežja pod kap in nazaj*, 617).

of influential politicians in Slovenia, and thought in a similar way to ordinary members of the party and even activists from the alternative scene in the republic. In his thinking, Muževič was far less bound by the outdated ideological schemes of the communist establishment at the time. Thus, in theory, he could have contributed to the transformation of Yugoslavia's social system into a more modern form. However, Muževič and other politicians of a similar profile in the SKJ leadership did not form any common bloc that could be the vehicle for such a process. The Yugoslav identity was too weak for that to happen, not only by Muževič, but probably also by other politicians of a more liberal bent from various parts of the federation. The distinctly Yugoslav political position within the establishment remained largely associated with orthodox defence of the communist ideology that could no longer give answers to new social challenges, and was leaving the scene along with its protagonists. In contrast, the liberal-oriented politicians of the younger generation thought primarily within the boundaries of their own nation, which was getting more pronounced with the deepening crisis of the Yugoslav state. Boris Muževič went through this process surprisingly easily, especially given that he had largely linked his personal life to Belgrade. Although Muževič could have offered more interesting details and deeper reflection on the extraordinarily dynamic events he experienced and on his own role in his book, he still provided valuable material for understanding the end of the era of socialist Yugoslavia.

Muževič himself was supposed to move into diplomacy as Yugoslav ambassador to Peru in 1990, but the new Slovenian government, without the participation of the (reformed) communists, was no longer interested in either that position or Muževič. He subsequently went into business and did not return to politics afterwards.

Summary

The quality of memoir literature written by former Slovenian communist officials from the late socialist period is greatly influenced by the time when the books were written. In particular, the 1990s were characterised by the authors' (Franc Šetinc, Jože Smole) efforts to distance themselves from the former social order and the Yugoslav framework, in spite of their significant role in maintaining them. A somewhat more sober view of the beginnings of Slovenia's path to independence is offered in media interviews by a key figure in this process, Milan Kučan. However, he does not reflect his former communist identity and also shows his conviction that he was merely an executor of historical processes without feeling responsible for influencing them. A

new book by Boris Mužević differs from the previously published memoirs of his Slovenian colleagues in its diaristic character and in its much larger scope. Mužević introduces the reader to the course of the meetings of the Presidium of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, of which he was a part from 1985 to 1990. The example of Mužević himself shows that among the liberal-oriented officials in Slovenia, identification with Yugoslavia was relatively weak towards the end of the existence of the common state. During the deepening political crisis in the federation, he and many other politicians of this profile were guided primarily by belonging to their own nation, which was narrowing the space for a potential transformation of the political and economic system of the whole Yugoslavia into a more modern form.

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Резиме

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ЈУГОСЛОВЕНСКА ПОЛИТИКА ОСАМДЕСЕТИХ ГОДИНА ИЗ ПЕРСПЕКТИВЕ БОРИСА МУЖЕВИЧА И ДРУГИХ БИВШИХ СЛОВЕНАЧКИХ КОМУНИСТА

Апстракт: Текст се осврће на недавно објављени дневник Бориса Мужевича и раније мемоаре бивших словеначких комунистичких функционера. Ова литература, уз архивске изворе, искоришћена је за рефлексију улоге Мужевича и његових словеначких колега у догађајима који су претходили распаду Југославије. Померање пажње словеначких политичара са идеолошких на државно-правна питања било је нарочито уочљиво у периоду 1985–1989, док је Мужевич активно учествовао у ескалацији сукоба у југословенском комунистичком врху.

Кључне речи: Југославија, Словенија, Савез комуниста, осамдесете године

На квалитет мемоарске литературе чији су аутори бивши словеначки комунистички функционери из касног социјалистичког периода у великој мери утиче време настанка конкретних дела. Деведесете године биле су посебно карактеристичне за настојање аутора (Франц Шетинц, Јоже Смоле) да се дистанцирају од некадашњег друштвеног уређења и југословенског оквира, упркос њиховој значајној улози у одржавању истих. Нешто трезвенији поглед на почетке словеначког пута ка независности нуди у медијским интервјуима кључна личност овог процеса - Милан Кучан. Међутим, он се не осврће на свој некадашњи комунистички идентитет и такође изражава уверење да је био само извршилац историјских процеса без осећаја суодговорности за њихово усмеравање. Недавно објављена књига Бориса Мужевича разликује се од раније објављених мемоара његових колега из Словеније по свом дневничком карактеру и знатно већем обиму. Мужевич упознаје читаоце са током седница Председништва Савеза комуниста Југославије у којима је учествовао као извршни секретар и касније као пуноправни члан од 1985. до 1990. године. Пример самог Мужевича показује да је међу либерално оријентисаним функционерима у Словенији идентификација са Југославијом била поткрај постојања зајед-

ничке државе доста слаба. Током продубљивања политичке кризе у федерацији, многи политичари таквог профила водили су се првенствено припадношћу сопственој нацији, што је сужавало простор за потенцијалну трансформацију политичког и економског система целе Југославије у модернији државни облик.