

REVIEWS

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Book review

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TITOISM IN YUGOSLAVIA



Milanov, Kajica. 2021. *Titovšitna u Jugoslaviji*. Beograd: Društvo za ekonomsku istoriju i Institut za evropske studije, 350 str.

The philosopher Kajica Milanov belongs to those Serbian minds that can be said to have been almost completely forgotten. Because a space burdened by wars, occupations, uprisings, bloody changes of rulers, and ideological reckonings demands warriors more than pedantic intellectuals, this oblivion can be understood, although not justified. On the contrary, viewed from that perspective, the trivialization of significant figures of intellectual life proves to be especially harmful to a culture already burdened by discontinuities. Kajica Milanov himself was a victim of the radical break with tradition and heritage that occurred in 1945, from which Serbia has not recovered even to this day. In the newly established order, Milanov remained silent, not only because he was a civic philosopher but also because he consistently remained a political opponent of

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the new state, eventually leading him to emigration. He was at least fortunate not to suffer the fate of some of his colleagues who, at the time of revolutionary “justice,” paid for their beliefs with their lives. Thanks to the Society for Economic History and the Institute for European Studies, the emigrant works of Kajica Milanov have become available to a broader readership. This has taken an important step to bring the name of Professor Milanov out of oblivion and into the light of day.

The book “Titoism in Yugoslavia” (*Titovština u Jugoslaviji*) reveals Milanov as an exceptionally insightful political writer. It can be safely stated that, under different circumstances, if there had been no Second World War and the establishment of a communist dictatorship, he would have made a valuable contribution on the intellectual plane. In that case, however, he would certainly not have dealt with Titoism and the analysis of the anatomy of the communist regime, but with some other topics. In any case, this book reappears 60 years after its initial publication in emigration.

The title is quite clear, and at first glance, it may seem to the reader like a well-known criticism of communism in Yugoslavia, which

could have been compiled by any émigré based on their experience with the power established in 1945. However, things are much different, and Kajica Milanov offers much more. In the first chapter, the significance of Yugoslavia for the communist penetration of Europe is examined. This brief overview also presents a review of the foreign policy situation or a tiny geopolitical study in which Milanov demonstrates an incredible talent for recognizing the position or the circumstances in which he lives. After that, he writes about the reality of Yugoslavia. He describes in detail everything he experienced and saw in the country until 1947. This description might not be so interesting if Milanov did not work methodically and also show the transformation in the social and economic spheres. He leaves nothing untouched, so he writes about the state of intellectuals, experts, or peasants and workers. Special attention is paid to propaganda, education of the people, and enlightenment. Within this section, Milanov also gives a short terminological dictionary of communist Yugoslavia with some witty remarks.

In the seventh chapter, the mood of the people living in Yugoslavia is examined in detail,

as well as parties and political currents and the position of the emigration. These expositions have exciting moments and valuable data. It is striking that Milanov, even in emigration, still counts on Yugoslavia and the Bulgarians within the framework of a genuinely democratic Yugoslavia. In this sense, he is willing to compromise with the Croats in Bosnia or with the Bulgarians in Macedonia. Milanov also discusses with great attention those who could benefit from Tito's regime, who have been "leveled up," and who will therefore stand with the regime and against a return to the old state. Suppose his views on the survival of Yugoslavia and the inclusion of Bulgaria have proven to be mistaken in the part that deals with the forces that could stand out of their interests with the Tito regime. In that case, the author writes with a great deal of realism.

From there, the discussion moves on to the question of Titoism as a theory and Titoism as the practice of communist Yugoslavia (201). In this part, Milanov is quite precise, as he seeks to separate theory from practice and show how communism in Yugoslavia differs from communism in the USSR. At the same time, it should be emphasized that this is not an attempt to portray communism

in Yugoslavia as more humane or more liberal than the Soviet model. Milanov deals in detail with the causes and consequences of the conflict between Tito and Stalin and considers the possible development of the situation. He analyzes in detail the accurate and inaccurate Cominform accusations against Tito and Titoist's attempts at defense. It must be admitted that the depth of his insights is impressive. Even during emigration, Milanov clearly recognized that the West could support Tito to weaken the Soviet bloc.

In the book's ninth chapter, the discussion then moves on to a consideration of the great communist promises, and particular attention is paid to the illusion of the withering away of the state. This part is perhaps the most interesting. There, Milanov also demonstrates his knowledge of communist doctrine. It is noticeable that Milanov, as a critic of communism, does not appear as a typical conservative but also holds some conditionally speaking left, progressive positions.

Finally, in part dealing with the brief history of Yugoslavia, the creation of the Independent State of Croatia, the war situation, and Tehran, Milanov provides an excellent description of the problem

in a few pages. Regarding the civil war, he notes the existence of three fronts: social, Serb-Croat, and occupation. The sides differed according to what was of primary importance to them. Thus, it turns out that the Chetniks and Ljotić's movements were primarily fighters against communism and that, in that sense, the fight against the Germans was of secondary importance. On the other hand, Draža Mihailović and his movement emphasized the fight against the occupiers, while the battle against communism remained in the background for them. On the other hand, the Croatian Ustaše were focused on the extermination of Serbs. Milanov concludes that Yugoslavia was handed over to the communists and that it had nothing to do with the partisan strength. If Serbia had happened to be located geographically in the west of the country, the annexation of Yugoslavia to the communist bloc would have been impossible since, as Milanov convincingly shows, Serbia was anti-communist. This is a critical moment that refutes all those theses that have been in circulation in Europe for too long, according to which there is some inherent tendency of Orthodox peoples towards communism. The fact that similar ideas can be heard

today among domestic advocates of a specific type of national communism, only with the opposite sign and valuation, only confirms that such bold theses should not be stated lightly, especially not before consulting relevant literature, including Kajica Milanov's book.

Finally, the book concludes with a short conclusion in which Milanov once again warns of the total nature of the communist transformation and their desire for world domination. Although Milanov does not differ from many authors who have written about communism, one gets the impression that he nevertheless arrived at these conclusions independently.

The book is supplemented by an important article by Milanov in which he examines Dušan Nedeljković's attempt to interpret the history of Serbian philosophy in a communist key and Djilas's criticism of that book. From this short but valuable article, it can be seen how strong Nedeljković's legacy is today, or rather that our histories of political ideas are still written from a predominantly leftist perspective, as can be seen even from the choice of personalities who are included in such presentations. Also, Milanov recognized that the

conflict between Nedeljković and Djilas reflected the divergence on the line between communist internationalism, embodied by Djilas, and Stalinism (Nedeljković). In addition to the preface by Slobodan Jovanović, the book is accompanied by two essential

contributions by Boris Milovanović. In the first, Milovanović deals with the dispute over Serbian history between Nedeljković and Djilas, while the second contribution is a more than helpful biography of Kajica Milanov.

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