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# CREATING A SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA

Tito, Communist Leadership  
and the National Question

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVNOJ	Antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja <i>Antifascist Council for Popular Liberation</i>
CC	Central Committee
CK KPJ	Central Committee of the KPJ
CK SKJ	Central Committee of the SKJ
Cominform	Communist Information Bureau
Comintern	Communist International
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
FEC	Federal Executive Council
HRSS	Hrvatska republikanska seljačka stranka <i>The Croatian Republican Peasant Party</i>
HSS	Hrvatska seljačka stranka <i>The Croatian Peasant Party</i>
JNA	Jugoslav Peoples' Army
KPH	Komunistička partija Hrvatske <i>The Croatian Communist Party</i>
KPJ	Komunistička partija Jugoslavije <i>The Yugoslav Communist Party</i>
KPM	Komunistička partija Makedonije <i>The Macedonian Communist Party</i>
NDH	Nezavisna Država Hrvatska <i>Independent Croatian State</i>
NFJ	Narodni front Jugoslavije <i>Popular Front of Yugoslavia</i>
NKOJ	Nacionalni komitet oslobođenja Jugoslavije <i>National Committee of Liberation of Yugoslavia</i>
NOO	Narodnooslobodilački odbor <i>People's Liberation Council</i>
NOVJ	Narodnooslobodilačka vojska Jugoslavije <i>The People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia</i>
NOVŠ	National Liberation Army of Albania



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OOUR	Osnovna organizacija udruženog rada <i>Basic organisation of associated labour</i>
PKSH	Partia komuniste e Shqipërisë <i>Communist Party of Albania</i>
SANU	The Serbian Academy of Science and Arts
SKH	Savez komunista Hrvatske <i>League of Communists of Croatia</i>
SKJ	Savez komunista Jugoslavije <i>League of Communists of Yugoslavia</i>
SSDP	Serbian Social Democratic Party
SRPJ(k)	Socijalistička radnička partija Jugoslavije (komunista) <i>The Socialist Workers' Party of Yugoslavia (Communist)</i>
SDB	Služba državne bezbednosti <i>Service for State Security</i>
UDBa	Uprava državne bezbednosti <i>Administration of State Security</i>
VMRO	(IMRO) Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation <i>Внатрешна Македонска Револуционерна Организација, Vnatrešna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija</i>
ZAVNOH	Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Hrvatske <i>National Antifascist Council for People's Liberation of Croatia</i>
ZUR	Zakon o udruženom radu <i>Law on associated labour</i>



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# INTRODUCTION

## **Creating a socialist Yugoslavia: Tito, communist leadership and the national question**

The national question has [in our country] been solved; and at that very well been settled, to the general satisfaction of all our peoples. It has been solved in the manner taught by Lenin ... and this solution to the national question reflects on the character of our revolution.<sup>1</sup>

(Speech given by Tito to the Slovenian Academy of  
Science and Art in November, 1948)

When the Yugoslav communists came to power in 1945, they claimed to have introduced a socialist solution to the Yugoslav national question. This 'solution' originally promulgated a federal state framework. Five of the constitutive peoples<sup>2</sup> were granted a 'home' republic and were constitutionally guaranteed the right to self-determination including secession. The 'solution' depended on the principle of national equality where no group was able to dominate within Yugoslavia. Constitutional and institutional aspects of this 'solution' were based on the slogan of 'Brotherhood and Unity', combined with an aspiration to develop a socialist society under the leadership of a fully unified Yugoslav communist party. Brotherhood and Unity were later complemented with an attempt to infuse society with a new concept of socialist Yugoslavism, a concept which sought to give socialist theoretical legitimacy to the SKJ's (*Savez komunista Jugoslavije* – League of Communists of Yugoslavia) solution to the national question.

This book examines the strategies pursued by the Yugoslav communists from 1935 until 1990 in their quest to find this 'socialist solution' to the national question. It looks at how the Yugoslav communist party formulated

its thinking about the national question within the specific Yugoslav historical context. The Yugoslav communist movement had been searching to find a common approach to the national question in Yugoslavia since the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, originally under the name *Socijalistička radnička partija Jugoslavije (komunista)* (SRPJ[k]) came into existence in 1919. The approaches during the inter-war period attached varying degrees of importance to the national question and to the degree in which the communists should concern themselves with this question.

From 1935, the KPJ endorsed a strategy of searching for a 'socialist solution' to the national question within a multinational Yugoslav context. This approach recognised the existence of multiple national groups; the KPJ was ready to concede the right of these groups to self-determination based on a federal principle. The promise of national self-determination and equality formed a crucial aspect of their 'solution' to the national question. So did the advocacy of a common Yugoslav line. The socialist aspect of this solution was predicated on the belief that only the building of a socialist society under the auspices of a unified Bolshevik party could ensure a true solution to this question. The KPJ/SKJ believed that this approach would lessen the importance of national conflict. Although the commitment to national equality based on an all-Yugoslav federal principle remained the paramount aspect of their approach to the national question throughout their time in power, the KPJ remained more evasive about what sort of Yugoslav unity they envisioned. The federal system they introduced underwent many changes, as did their definition of their solution to the national question.

The changes in the KPJ/SKJ's strategies on the national question were influenced by a variety of factors. Some changes were catalysed by external events like the break with Stalin, while others were influenced by internal processes such as intra-party struggles and inter-republican relations, democratisation attempts and reform processes. The differing and often opposing views held by various national groups on the question of the ideal organisation of the Yugoslav state also had an impact on their policies, as did the lack of a common understanding of the purpose of Yugoslavia. The need to maintain unity while at the same time allowing room for diversity within a highly heterogeneous state, represented a dilemma for the communist party. Striking a balance between unity (of party and of state) *and* diversity remained a challenge throughout the party's existence. Achieving unity remained one of the main aspirations of the KPJ/SKJ, but the Yugoslav communist movement continued to be a diversified movement both before and after getting

into power. This diversity was to have a profound impact on the party's approach to the national question. The Yugoslav communists approached this from a Marxist position, but their diverse backgrounds frequently led them to respond to problems and issues in very different ways. The way the tension between the need to ensure both unity and diversity in Yugoslavia impacted on the attitudes of communist leaders is explored throughout this book, not only in the context of the national question, but also with regard to the organisation of the state, the party and the long-term aims of the KPJ. Ultimately the KPJ/SKJ had to decide whether their most important task was maintaining the leading role of the party or the management of national conflict within the new Yugoslavia. These two tasks closely depended on each other, and both were vital.

### **Approach**

This study takes a macro-history perspective, focusing on how the communist elites conceptualised and responded to the challenges the management of the national question imposed on their regime. However, the book is not intended to be another 'history of Yugoslavia'. Nor is it the purpose to address all aspects of the national question and of all expressions of national conflict in Yugoslavia. It is not primarily an attempt to 'explain Yugoslavia's demise', but a study of the Yugoslav communist movement's approach to a particular issue – that of the national question – within a Yugoslav historical context. My purpose has been to examine how the Communist Party of Yugoslavia conceived and approached the national question in Yugoslavia, and especially to shed light on how management of national conflict within a socialist multinational state differed from that of non-socialist multinational states. Shortly after the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s, the three socialist multinational federal regimes (the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia) all disintegrated, in different ways. From each emerged new nation-states, and in numerous cases an increase in national tension followed. Many studies have since addressed the rise of national conflict in post-communist regimes. However, the question of how the communist elites approached the national question in a multinational context and attempted to manage national conflict between the different national groups that lived within these federal states merits more attention. Theory on the management and regulation of ethnic and national conflict emanated primarily from the study of elite co-operation and the regulation of ethnic and national conflict in divided societies in Western democracies, but later expanded to comparative

studies of national conflict in deeply divided societies in other parts of the world.<sup>3</sup> Even though certain aspects of these theories can be useful for the study of national conflict in former state-socialist regimes, most existing theories on ethnic and national conflict regulation do not take into account the ideological aspect of how communist elites conceptualised the nation and the national question, and how this affected the manner in which they managed national conflict.

The postwar development of Yugoslav politics and history was subject to a highly complex interaction of political, social, cultural, ideological, institutional and economic processes, influenced by a variety of internal and external pressures. In my view, ideology held a central role in the forming of policies and strategies of postwar Yugoslavia, especially those relating to the national question. The Yugoslav communists were highly pragmatic, nevertheless the shaping of policies and strategies was – to a large extent – ideologically defined; the professed aim and vision of the KPJ/SKJ was to create a socialist society. The Yugoslav state formed the framework, and the SKJ strategies on the national question were set within the boundaries of their socialist Yugoslav project. Ideology is therefore vitally important when addressing the question of how national conflict was managed in a socialist context. In the media and much of the popular literature that emerged in the immediate aftermath of the outbreak of war in the former Yugoslav territories, the upsurge in national conflict during the 1990s has commonly been explained through a ‘lifting of the lid’ analogy whereby the communists have been seen to have put a lid on a boiling pot of irreconcilable conflict between groups unable to coexist. This analogy suggests that events post-1989 were a kind of history repeating itself, referring back to national tension in the inter-war period and above all the fratricidal war during World War II. These are often the same commentaries that have viewed the Yugoslav conflicts primarily as a result of ethnic hatred. Few serious researchers on Yugoslavia would promote such a view. Such analogies view everything that happened between as of no consequence, and inadvertently accept too readily the communist elite’s own claim to have ‘solved the national question’. They also tend to ignore the presence of national discourses within state-socialist regimes, and suggest that national conflict under the communist regime was prevented by sheer coercion and suppression. These are all presumptions that need to be questioned. Suppression and coercion were certainly available options to manage national relations, but they did not represent the only strategy available to the Yugoslav communists. Instead, their ability to ensure good national relations

between the different national groups, and to present themselves as the force preventing national conflict, became an important factor in their search for popular support for their regime, and an imperative source in their wider strategies through which they sought legitimacy for their socialist project. I do not believe that national ideology disappeared under the regime of the Yugoslav Communist Party. On the contrary, I argue that national ideologies coexisted in a sometimes symbiotic, sometimes antagonistic relationship with other ideas, often under a different label. Such ideologies also remained in different arenas, most notably within the cultural sphere and within the ruling communist party itself. Nor were the communists immune to the force of national ideology themselves.<sup>4</sup> I see national ideology as a phenomenon that the communist elites had to take into account and could not afford to ignore.

### **The national question in Yugoslav communist discourse**

With regard to the national phenomena, it is not formation and development of individual *national discourses* but rather *the national question in Yugoslav communist discourse* that forms the focus of this book. I refer in this work to the national question in Yugoslav communist discourse as the synthesis of their understanding of the nation and their rhetoric and policies on the national question. Such policies tended to be highly pragmatic and grew from the need to find a practical approach to the existence of multiple national groups and potential or real national conflict within a multinational state. Their approach was nevertheless deeply rooted in a particular theoretical perception of the nation that originated within the Marxist-Leninist tradition to which they adhered. The Yugoslav communists nominally perceived ‘the national question’ as a question that could be solved. Such a framing of the national as a question that required an answer and a solution was in itself derived from Marxist theory. In *The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*, the national question was defined as:

The totality of political, economic, territorial, legal, ideological and cultural relations among nations (*natsii*), national groups and nationalities (*narodnosti*) in various socioeconomic formations.<sup>5</sup>

Marxists both defined the national phenomena as a question, and aspired to come up with a response to it. In Yugoslavia, as in the Soviet Union, the communists claimed not only to have found a response, but also a solution to the national question. This formulation had important consequences for the communists’ further discourse on the national question in

Yugoslavia, and also had implications for the examination of their strategies on the national question. The Yugoslav communists engaged with the nation on a number of levels. Within the framework of Yugoslavia they awarded the right of national self-determination to some previously recognised peoples such as Croats, Serbs and Slovenes; they recognised ones that had not been recognised within the first Yugoslav state, like Montenegrins and Macedonians, and in the Macedonian case, they actively engaged in the construction of a new nation. In addition to this, at certain times they aspired to create a new supranational, socialist Yugoslav culture and identity. An important question is, why was the national question at all important to the communists? Their professed worldview was an internationalist one, in which class was more important than the nation. In his definition of the nation, Benedict Anderson argues that, as 'imagined community', 'the nation is always conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship'<sup>6</sup>. Although the nation as a political community is, in the words of Anderson 'imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign'.<sup>7</sup> Marxism is in principle based on a notion of universality and internationalism. National discourse builds on an underlying notion that individuals have a 'home country', even in cases where the person lives in another country.<sup>8</sup> The views that characterise the national discourse on how to organise the world thus stood in contrast to the Marxist discourse that was inherently international, agitated for a vertical comradeship based on class loyalty in nature and placed class conflict as the primary form of human conflict rather than national conflict.

Theoretically and practically, the greatest ordeal faced by communists regarding the nation, was to find a way in which to come to terms with the competition from national(ist) movements. Marxists aimed for international workers' solidarity across national borders, but largely avoided providing theoretical clarity on the vital topics of the position of the nation and the existence of national conflict. For this reason, they have not been able to account theoretically for the powerful effect the allegiance to the nation-state has had on the masses during the twentieth century.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, on a practical level, the communist engagement with the nation had above all to do with how to mobilise support for the communist cause. After the communist party came to power, their interest in the national issue had to do with retaining their leading role in society and to seek legitimacy to this role. Marxists, most prominently Lenin, viewed the national question as having a great revolutionary potential. They understood how concerns about national identity could be harnessed to provide support for the socialist revolutionary movement.



Lenin foresaw the danger of letting non-socialist movements monopolise the political and social potential of national forces and was willing to form strategic alliances with them and concede certain qualified rights to nations. Indeed, the slogan of the right to self-determination, including that of secession, was to become a principal part of the Marxist-Leninist approach not only to the national question but also to their overall revolutionary strategy. National oppression therefore became perceived as the manifestation of capitalist oppression in ‘the time of imperialism’, and according to Lenin, a socialist revolution would not be conceivable without addressing the question of national oppression.

Although the national question was a supposedly bourgeois problem and continued to be viewed as an issue belonging to the capitalist sphere, from the 1920s, the international communist movement increasingly advocated that a revolutionary ‘solution’ to the nationalist question should be found. To overcome the challenge socialist revolutionaries encountered from nationalist forces, Lenin advocated a tactical strategy whereby socialist revolutionaries not only adopt the doctrine of national self-determination, but actually go beyond it. Socialist revolutionaries thus made the promise of national self-determination, including the right to secession, a hallmark of their strategies, even if these promises in many ways stood in direct contradiction to their own internationalist aspirations. The logic behind this strategy was dictated by a belief that even if the fight for national independence was capable of making the masses act in opposition to their economic interests, the offering of self-determination would serve to put to rest the national question and lead the masses to focus on their economic interests. It was this kind of logic that led socialist revolutionaries to believe that one could ‘solve’ a national question.

#### **Introducing a socialist solution to the national question**

The claim to have introduced a ‘socialist solution to the national question’ immediately raises two questions: What does it imply to *solve* a national question? And, what does introducing a *socialist* solution to a national question entail? The belief that it was possible to ‘solve’ a national question was rooted in the SKJ’s conceptualisation of the nation from a Marxist-Leninist position. Such a claim further relied on a perception that national conflict could, if not immediately, then at least over time, be overcome. It built on a belief that national conflict could be *resolved*, rather than *regulated*. Through the building of socialism, it was believed that the attachment to national values and identities would

become less important. While the Yugoslav communists to a large degree recognised that national conflict would not automatically disappear with the introduction of a socialist regime, their claim to have solved the national question went beyond being a rhetorical stratagem. The federal institutions created were not designed in such a way as to deal with national conflict as an ongoing phenomenon, and territorial federalism was countered by a high degree of party centralism. The claim to have introduced a 'socialist solution' to such a question furthermore implied that the Yugoslav communists had imposed an *ideological* 'solution' to come to grips with Yugoslavia's complex national make-up. The rather bold claim made by the KPJ may have been useful when they initially came to power, but it also had serious consequences for their further policies towards this question. The claim to have solved the issue made it almost impossible to discuss problematic aspects relating to the national question in an open and public manner. There were also important implications for the rhetoric employed, and for the legitimising strategies of the KPJ/SKJ.

#### **Legitimising and hegemonic strategies**

This book also examines what role the national question, and the ability of the Yugoslav communist leaders to manage it, played in the legitimising strategies of the SKJ. A crisis of legitimation has often been pointed to as a crucial factor in the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe in the late 1980s.<sup>10</sup> Regardless of whether or not the communist regimes enjoyed any degree of legitimacy, it is clear that to a certain extent they attempted to employ legitimising strategies in order to retain their power. The KPJ/SKJ claim to have created a new Yugoslavia founded on national equality and 'Brotherhood and Unity', formed an important source in their attempt to legitimise their leading role in Yugoslav society. To what extent was the legitimacy of the new Yugoslav state linked to the legitimacy of the Yugoslav communist regime? To address these issues, I have adopted and adapted the theories of Ian S. Lustick. Lustick's theory builds on a Gramscian understanding of hegemonic processes, and he is particularly concerned with the presumption that boundaries (including boundaries of the state) are treated as a *given*. He argues that a discussion of the boundaries of a social order – here the state – has explicitly or implicitly been excluded from the framework of analysis: 'From the internal perspective of any state,' Lustick points out, 'stable borders are reflections of presumptive beliefs which remove

potentially intractable questions of the composition from the political arena.<sup>11</sup> He further argues that:

Different borders have different demographic implications and different political myths associated with them. The territorial shape of a state therefore helps to determine what interests are legitimate, what resources are mobilisable, what questions are open for debate, what ideological formulas will be relevant, what cleavages could become significant and what political allies might be available.<sup>12</sup>

Lustick defines institutionalisation as ‘a process by which change in the rules of political competition becomes increasingly disruptive and decreasingly likely to be part of the strategic calculus of competitors within the institutional arena.’ In the building of institutions, including the building of the state, ‘the process, by which positively valued and stable expectations are produced or destroyed, includes both continuous and discontinuous elements, and both political and psychological aspects.’<sup>13</sup> In Yugoslavia, the framework of the Yugoslav state, and the nature of the social relations among the population living within the territorial boundaries of it, could not be seen as a given. Since the Yugoslav state had come into being in 1918, there had been disagreement on what form South Slav unity should take, and on what the nature of relations among the peoples within the state should be like. Furthermore, the Yugoslav state was destroyed during World War II, and in the ensuing civil war, the relationship between the different groups was far from unanimous. The KPJ reorganised the state into a federation, where both old and new groups were given the status of national groups and therefore granted a national homeland. The KPJ only made their decisions regarding the actual internal organisation, number and status of federal units and their borders at the very end of World War II. Some of the borders and units were new, yet many of them were also shaped along old historical lines. Some were more contentious than others. While Yugoslavia represented the core of unit for the KPJ, the communists were also eager for a while to expand this unit, and until 1948, toyed with the idea of creating a Balkan federation. The existence and the shape of the Yugoslav state and its boundaries were therefore not at all self-evident when the KPJ came to power.

After 1935, the KPJ was clearly committed to the continuity of Yugoslav unity. The promise of introducing a ‘socialist solution’ formed an important part of the Yugoslav communists’ strategy to gain support for their wider aspirations to build a socialist society. The Yugoslav state

formed the framework of this project, one that could ensure social justice and equality for all the peoples within it. The new state represented at the same time both continuity and discontinuity with the old Yugoslav state.

### **Aims and objectives**

The emphasis in this book is on how the SKJ itself articulated its strategies and policies on the national question. The focus is not the formation or reproduction of national consciousness or national identity, but the public articulation and representation of such identities in the Yugoslav communist discourse. For this reason, the analysis focuses on the political elites. How was a socialist Yugoslav identity represented in the discourse of the Yugoslav communists? To what extent and in which form was such an identity identified as alternative to other competing national or multinational representations in Yugoslavia? The study retains emphasis on the main figures that articulated the Yugoslav communists' responses to the complex multinational context in which they lived and worked. While recognising that not everything the communists said was necessarily reflected in their actions, I see it as vital to analyse why these issues were articulated and framed in the manner and language they were. In addition, I focus on what impact these issues and the communists' articulation again had on the dynamics between the theoretical and the practical aspects of their discourse. The question of how the Yugoslav communists articulated their position in the public sphere is therefore imperative.

To examine how the communists' own constructs, and their policies towards national relations, changed over time, the strategies on this question must be placed in context of the wider ideological and institutional processes in the Yugoslav socialist system. The process through which the KPJ/SKJ's policies on the national question evolved is viewed in this study as a dynamic one, remoulding the interaction between actors within the new system, and also the nature of the system itself. The framework of Yugoslav communists' socialist project set clear limitations for how different issues were articulated in public; what was and was not legitimate to express in public debates, and in which forums.<sup>14</sup> Although the communists were not in a position to implement their 'solution' to the national question until after World War II, they arrived at the decision to introduce a federal state model (initially loosely-defined) within an all-Yugoslav framework at the Plenum of the KPJ's Central Committee in Split in 1935. For this reason, 1935 forms the starting point for this work. The main aspects of the SKJ's response to the national question and changes in the SKJ's management of the national question from

1935–1990 will be presented. What characterised their understanding of and strategies on the national question, what issues influenced these strategies, and why and how did they change? And eventually, what impact did they have on the legitimacy of the Yugoslav state?

#### **Political figures, sources and literature**

Certain figures in the party played a key role in developing the Yugoslav communist discourse on national relations. Tito had remained the undisputed leader of the Yugoslav communist movement since 1939,<sup>15</sup> and was its outward symbol. Kardelj became the leading ideologue of the Yugoslav socialist system, and the main defender of the doctrine of socialist self-management on which the system built. He was also the main architect behind the federal and constitutional framework of the Yugoslav state, and the party's main spokesman on its theoretical position on the national question. These two men engaged in the production of considerable articles, speeches as well as party resolutions, statutes and programmes. This material was collected by the party itself and despite the occasional clean-out of the archives, much remains available as archival sources and in selections published in multi-volume series. Many of the leaders' most important statements were also published in the party's official publication *Komunist*, or in party newspapers like *Borba*, *Vjesnik*, *Oslobodenje* and *Delo*. The works of Kardelj and Tito formed the core of the official policy on the national question. These were the works which everybody else had to respond to, and which defined the official position at any given time. On the other hand, the responses generated often had an impact on the direction of the leadership's policies. An important example of this was the change in Kardelj's thinking on the role of the republics in the early 1960s. In many cases, the leadership set the cue for discussion, but allowed others (writers, lawyers) to carry out the discussions, albeit within clearly defined limits of the party's officially sanctioned public discourse.<sup>16</sup> In some cases, republican leaderships allowed particular debates to take place in the cultural sphere in order to promote a particular view on what they considered an important issue. The Slovene–Serbian polemics on Socialist Yugoslavism in the 1950s and 1960s are a good example of this. In general, the strictness of censorship gave a good indication of how 'liberal' or controlling the party was at particular times.

A number of the leading members of the SKJ have written memoirs, biographies and autobiographies. A question can be raised as to the reliability of such sources. To what extent can we use the memoirs of figures like Milovan Đilas who was ousted from the SKJ because of his critique of the Party in

1954? Although Đilas became the best-known critic of the Yugoslav system in the West, he had also held a central position as one of the four most high-ranking leaders in the Party until this point. He had been part of the ultra-left wing of the Party and had held a decisive role in forming many of the policies and aspects of the Yugoslav system that he would later criticise. For this reason I have chosen to treat the articles he wrote and the speeches he held while in power as primary sources (in line with those of other Politburo members) while approaching his later works from a different angle. The same applies for other prominent party leaders who later wrote memoirs recounting their view of events that had taken place earlier. These memoirs have been approached as subjective retrospect accounts of events where such figures held a central or sometimes more peripheral role. While such accounts cannot be taken to be 'objective' accounts of events, they nevertheless add valuable insight into the interpersonal relationships between the different figures, many of who have since passed away.

A great challenge has also been posed when it comes to Slobodan Milošević. His secretive approach and carefulness not to leave a documentary trail behind, make it exceedingly difficult to extract information about his intentions and strategies from his speeches, media statements and other public statements at the time. Unless these are set in context of Milošević's actual actions and the events that unfolded in Yugoslavia in the 1980s, they make little sense.<sup>17</sup>

Not surprisingly, the more prolific producers of memoirs tended to be figures who had been ousted or for other reasons left the party or came to play more marginal roles in the actual development of policies. These works were frequently catering to a Western audience as much as to a Yugoslav one. This particularly was the case with Milovan Đilas and historian Vladimir Dedijer. These two, together with Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, were among the most productive communist memoirist chroniclers. Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo kept to writing his own memoirs,<sup>18</sup> but Đilas and Dedijer also published biographies on Josip Broz Tito.<sup>19</sup> Dedijer had been Tito's official biographer, and his first work from 1953 naturally portrayed Tito in his full glory.<sup>20</sup> His highly controversial and revisionist 'contributions' to Tito's biography in *Novi prilozi za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita* were far less flattering. This work, which formed the start of what should soon become a prolific stream of new works with a more critical view on the legacy of the Titoist years, sparked a furore in Yugoslavia.

The greatest anomaly remained the case of Aleksandar Ranković. The high-profile Serbian head of the security police who was ousted in 1966,

kept silent all the years he remained alive. His alleged diary was nevertheless published by his wife after he died in 1983.<sup>21</sup> The most high-ranking Yugoslav and SKJ leaders who remained in power throughout the period of research, most importantly Edvard Kardelj, Vladimir Bakarić and Josip Broz Tito, engaged less in such autobiographical exercises.<sup>22</sup> Nor did they really need to. By virtue of their positions in power, they held control over Yugoslav historiography and over how important historical events, the party and its leaders were presented and their performance interpreted. They set clear boundaries for what others could write about them, especially within Yugoslavia. They held central roles in forming the actual policies on the national question and strategies to manage national conflict.

A number of memoirs have also been written by figures from the generation who participated in events in the late 1960s and early 1970s and were ousted from the leadership, such as Latinka Perović, Mika Tripalo, Savka Dabčević-Kučar, Stane Kavčič and Vlado Gotovac, to mention a few. These are similarly treated with care. Many have been written in retrospect, as antitheses to the officially presented picture of their actions at earlier junctions; in many cases authors have a clear wish to legitimise their own position or actions. While such sources must be used with qualifications, they are nevertheless valuable to gain a broader picture than the official view served by the party itself. They give insight into how these participants viewed their own role in these events. They particularly add a human dimension and are helpful to understand the interpersonal relations between the men and women who held central roles in the attempt to create a Yugoslav socialist society. In some cases, they add the sort of inside information that is difficult to gain from official documents. Although they sometimes are of limited value as 'objective' historical sources, they offer valuable insight into the relations between the different leaders and as narratives of the world they lived in. These kinds of sources will not be interpreted in isolation, but placed in context of an analysis of ideological, political and institutional processes that are important to understand the approach of Yugoslav communists to the national question.

Even though the KPJ/SKJ did its best to retain hegemony over the public discourse in socialist Yugoslavia, control over the public sphere varied in different periods of the Party's rule, as did the strictness with which censorship was imposed over what was published. Debates and polemics which were printed in different journals, weeklies and dailies, offer a good insight not only into the strictness of censorship applied at



various times, but also into how some often controversial topics could be discussed under the guise of social and cultural debates. In order to shed some light on more underlying issues and on how the SKJ's articulations were perceived in the broader public sphere, it has been useful to examine certain polemics and public debates between different members of the intelligentsia and the political elites in for example newspapers and journals, and also to peek into the sphere of cultural politics. However, the fact that discussions often took place in other arenas than the purely political one, which was hegemonised by the communist party, poses a challenge to the researcher. This relates to the need, so to speak, of being able to decode the language which the participants use and to interpret the very particular vocabulary employed both by the party, due to their need to make sure Marxist ideology remained a part of the public discourse. This was valid also for those who were engaged in debates with these elites, who similarly needed to cloak their arguments in a language that did not leave them open to reactions from the regime. While this was less the case in Yugoslavia than in other state-socialist regimes, the debates and polemics that took place were frequently cloaked in a particular party-friendly rhetoric, where much of the terminology had very specific meaning. This of course poses some problems for an outside researcher regarding the question not only of what sources to look for, but also of how to read and employ them.

### **Outline**

Preceded by a preliminary chapter on the KPJ's strategies to the national question before 1935, the study delineates five specific phases in the development of Yugoslav federalism and of KPJ/SKJ management on the national question until 1990. The measures introduced from 1972–1980 marked only the beginning of a fourth phase in Yugoslav federalism under the KPJ/SKJ leadership, and the repercussions of the changes introduced in this period were not seen in full until after the death of Tito in 1980. The death of Tito and the original revolutionary leaders in Yugoslavia brought about a new dynamic in the SKJ's practical management of national relations, even if the developments in the 1980s cannot really be described as a new phase in the SKJ strategies towards the national question. Rather, this last phase could be described as a somewhat unsuccessful attempt by the new collective leadership to preserve the Titoist approach. The last chapter primarily focuses on discussing the factors that led to the fragmentation and delegitimation of the SKJ itself and of its professed solution to the national question in the 1980s.



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