

Branislav Radeljić

## ***Europe and the Collapse of Yugoslavia - The Role of Non-State Actors and European Diplomacy***

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Branislav Radeljić, who is a Senior Lecturer in International Politics at the University of East London, explained that this is a book “*about the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) and its collapse,... but at the same time it is a book about the European (Economic) Community (EEC/EC) of the latter European Union (EU)*” (p.1). The relationship between the SFRY and the EC/EU was very complex, including economic (the creation of a European market), political (a weak connection between the SFRY and the countries of the Eastern Bloc), and social (migration) issues of contestation. With a such background, this book deals with a problematic or “failed” involvement of the EC during the collapse of the SFRY. There have been numerous research projects about the collapse of Yugoslavia, analyzing, for example, macro-structural factors, the role of individuals (political leaders), ethnic identity, the role of foreign powers, and so on. The EC was not vital but yet was an important actor in the collapse of the SFRY, which prompted the author to complement the existing research projects by focusing on the confused approach of the EC/EU regarding the crisis in Yugoslavia. The book is divided into two parts - part one, *European Community Relations with Yugoslavia*, and part two, *The Role of Non-State Actors*.

In the first chapter, *Writing the Collapse of Yugoslavia: Existing and Potential Arguments*, the author, through the exclusive use of existing secondary sources from different places, examines the internal (the Croatian, Slovenian and Serbian leadership, economic factors) and external factors (western powers, especially Germany and Great Britain) which contributed to the collapse of Yugoslavia.

In the second chapter, called *The European Community and Yugoslavia from Unofficial to Official Relations*, the author deals with the relations

between the EC/EU and the SFRY in the period from the early 1950s until the late 1970s, ending with a conclusion about the complex and difficult economic, political and social relations between them. The establishment of official relations between the EC/EU and the SFRY in 1968 did not have a significant impact despite numerous treaties signed between the EC/EU and the SFRY. The 1970s should have been a period of economic cooperation. The EC/EU tried to strengthen economic cooperation, but this made the SFRY sceptical and only deepened the lack of trust within the EC/EU. The situation was worsened by the fact that the EC/EU introduced measures of regulating the inflow of immigrants from the SFRY.

The third chapter, *The European Community and Yugoslavia from Integration to Disintegration*, deals with the 1980s, which were an important period that defined the fate of Yugoslavia. It presents the relations between the EC/EU and the SFRY with numerous misunderstandings that arose from this relationship. This chapter identifies non-governmental actors, which played a leading role in protecting their interests abroad. The author believes that this established the autonomy of the republics within Yugoslavia as the leading goal of the Yugoslav Wars.

The second part of the book begins with the fourth chapter. *Calling Diaspora and Diaspora Calling: Impact of Diasporas on European Community Policy* discusses how diasporas' readiness for protests and unification were supplemented by emotions evoked and inflamed by the media. The role of the diaspora as contributors to the independence of Slovenia and Croatia is crucial to understanding the role of the EC in the crisis in Yugoslavia. The process of political socialization of the diaspora was fast and well defined.

The mass media incited and kept the conflict in SFRY going, which is the subject of the fifth chapter, *Media Power: Media Influence on European Community Policy*. The success of the local media (Slovenian, Croatian and Serbian) in creating their own interpretation of events was even more poignant when their interpretations were accepted as the prevailing vision of the conflict in the media within the EC/EU. "Facts" presented by national televisions were accepted by the western media as alarming and thus demanding action.

The sixth chapter, *With the Blessing of the Vatican: The Catholic Church and European Community Policy*, deals with the Catholic Church and its incredible power of intervention and participation in political decisions. Religion held a very important role. It showed itself to be the social component that helped in the collapse of the SFRY, that is, as a powerful tool in strengthening identity. Due to the denominations of the citizens of the countries which "decided" the fate of the SFRY, the largest influence was held by the Catholic Church in the EC/EU - the Vatican.

The conclusion presents a short summary of the main arguments. Due to the unstable relations between the EC/EU and the SFRY, as well as a lack of an appropriate strategy in decisive moments, non-state actors reacted decisively in key periods of the development of Yugoslavia, influencing the decision making of the EC/EU in favour of recognizing the independence of Slovenia and Croatia.

The author uses an interdisciplinary approach (political science and history) to analyze relations that defined the period of collapse. He uses primary sources (from the archives of the countries that played a significant role in the collapse of Yugoslavia), secondary sources (selected literature) and interviews (with persons chosen for their direct involvement in the events and political leadership in the EC/EU and the SFRY, or for their indirect involvement – government officials, diplomats, councillors, professors, journalists, the clergy,...).

With a brilliant methodological approach, this book is one of the first in-depth analyses of the relations between the EC/EU and the SFRY. By using multiple sources, the author investigated relations between the EC/EU and the SFRY from the 1950s until the latter's collapse, and manages to place his analysis in the broader context which calls for further research.

As was the author's hope, this interesting work is relevant for both students and others researching the collapse of the SFRY.

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