

## Igor Vranić: “What is and what should never be – Review of I. Lučić, *Uzroci rata* and J. Glaurdić, *Vrijeme Europe*”

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Ivica (Ivo) Lučić, *Uzroci rata: Bosna i Hercegovina od 1980. do 1992. godine*. Zagreb: Despot Infinitus, 2013, pp. 522; bibliography; hb; 79.90 HRK; ISBN 9789537892067.

Josip Glaurdić, *Vrijeme Europe: Zapadne sile i raspad Jugoslavije*. Mate d.o.o.: Zagreb, 2011, pp. 440, index; bibliography; hb; 350 HRK; ISBN 9789532461381. Croatian translation of: *The Hour of Europe: Western Powers and the Breakup of Yugoslavia*. Yale University Press: New Haven, 2011.

When an historian decides to explore a recent topic, (s)he usually has a lot of already published material to begin work with. Ivo Lučić did not have that privilege, making his book *Uzroci rata: Bosna i Hercegovina od 1980. do 1992. godine* (*Causes of the War: Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1980 and 1992*) even more valuable. Most of the primary material used in the book are unpublished documents from the archives, collected by the author over the years. I would dare to say that his book is truly the first study that deals with the social and political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the 1980s in a serious and scholarly way. I hope his work inspires other scholars to take the same approach in research of the other ex-Yugoslav republics. This study is a real refreshment after numerous books about ‘Bosnia’,<sup>1</sup> in which their authors show, more or less, a visible lack of basic local knowledge, reproducing predominant narrative constructs about this country and its past.

The book consists of three parts. The first part explores various aspects of cultural and political life after the death of Josip Broz, such as the militarization of society, the cases of Međugorje and Duvno, the Agrokomerc affair, the Kecmanović affair, ‘nazi’ birthday in Sarajevo, etc. The second part deals with Bosnia and Herzegovina during the early 1990s, while the third part provides detailed deconstruction of the Karađorđevo myth concerning the ‘partition’ of Bosnia and Herzegovina between Slobodan Milošević and Franjo Tuđman.<sup>2</sup>

One of the myths about Bosnia-Herzegovina is that of prewar unity and

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<sup>1</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina is frequently referred to as ‘Bosnia’ in Western discourse. The shortening of this country’s long name is not as benign as it might look at first sight. It simplifies the picture of Bosnia to a national state of the Bosniaks, and eliminates from the narrative the Serbs and Croats who represent around 50% of the population.

<sup>2</sup> The ideas were developed earlier in Lučić (2003).

multiculturalism among its constituent nations. The author points out numerous examples which suggest that the situation was quite the opposite. For example, after the death of Josip Broz the number of political prisoners in Bosnia and Herzegovina rose no less than 83%. Lučić also presents the evidence that only 12% of Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina were members of the Communist party and that their political leaders did not have any legitimacy among the people. Singing Croatian national-patriotic songs in Herzegovina in the 1980s resulted in regular incarceration of the singers and lengthy jail sentences. At the same time, an eccentric private birthday in Sarajevo, which used iconography from the times of Nazi Germany, resulted only in verbal warnings due to the high social status of participants. Lučić convincingly shows that the fabric of society in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1980s was already deeply divided and the feeling of unity was not related to this republic's identity but rather to Yugoslavia and Yugoslavism.

In the second part of the book the author discusses the first democratic elections and the problems that arose afterwards amongst the winning political parties. The main problem of disagreement was the political and constitutional arrangement of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as each of its constituent nations had different visions for its future. Paradoxically, the situation today in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not much different.

Although it is difficult to disagree with most of what is written in the book, I cannot agree with two details. The first one is Lučić's statement about the constituent position of the Serbs in Croatia (p. 19). The author correctly points out that the Constitution in the Communist regime does not have any significant importance (p. 379). The Yugoslav Constitution was written with very unclear wording, leaving it open to different interpretation. The formulation of Croatia as: the "*national republic of Croats, republic of Serbs and republic of other minorities*" is an example of such double meaning, because nowhere is it explained what this means. Some say this formulation means that Croatia is also a national republic of the Serbs, however, it can also point out the special status of the Serbs who are more than a minority but less than a constituent nation. The second detail is the statement that "*ethnic cleansing was legalized in Dayton*" (p. 470). I would rather agree with Pehar,<sup>3</sup> that this is legally and ethically impossible, because crimes can not be legalized in the Constitution, although, indeed, ethnic cleansing did occur.

It is a pity that on occasion the author does not elaborate more on presented facts (especially in the first part of the book), because it is obvious that he has much more to say. After reading the book, I hope we will soon have the chance to read its natural second part about the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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Another book discussed here is: *Vrijeme Europe: Zapadne sile i raspad Jugoslavije*, the Croatian translation of *The Hour of Europe: Western Powers and Breakup of Yugoslavia*, published in 2011 by Josip Glaurdić. Although the book deals with almost the same problems as the second part of Ivo Lučić's book, it approaches

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<sup>3</sup> Pehar (2011): 133.

them in quite the opposite way. The book is methodologically inconsistent; the author tells stories in poetic language inappropriate for a scientific book and ‘resolves’ problems without pointing out that something is not known or something should be explored more. For example, the author takes an interview of the elderly former Yugoslav admiral Branko Mamula in *Death of Yugoslavia* in the 1990s as trustworthy, although Mamula spoke about the events from the 1980s – how he had told Milan Kučan that opposition will overthrow him and breakup Yugoslavia (p. 25). He also takes the statements about the Milošević-Tudman meeting at Karadorđevo by Stipe Mesić and Dušan Bilandžić as trustworthy. However, he does not bother to mention the role of Mesić in overthrowing the moderate Stjepan Kljuić as president of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian HDZ. Instead of mentioning Mesić by name, he gives an expression that does not reveal much – it was the ‘Boban wing’ which overthrew Kljuić (p. 264).

Beside methodology, Glaurdić incorrectly uses terminology on occasions. For example, he continually uses the term ‘Yugoslavs’ when referring to the population of Yugoslavia. The term ‘Yugoslavs’ has been used to describe the people who declared themselves to be of Yugoslav nationality, while the population of Yugoslavia should rather be referred to as ‘citizens of Yugoslavia’. Another term that the author continually uses wrongly is ‘ethnic’ instead of ‘national’. In Yugoslavia (and elsewhere in the Balkans) nationhood rather than citizenship provided membership in a nation, unlike most Western countries.<sup>4</sup>

Glaurdić is highly subjective and biased throughout the whole of his book. For example he blames Western powers for not helping the last Yugoslav primeminister Ante Marković (p. 69), which is an idea already found in the work of David Gibbs.<sup>5</sup> The author also shows a complete misunderstanding of the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He claims that “*Bosnia and Herzegovina was defined in the Yugoslav constitution as a state, just like other republics*” (p. 217). The main problem is that Bosnia and Herzegovina was not like the other republics because it had three constituent nations instead of one. This basic misunderstanding leads Glaurdić to think about Bosnia and Herzegovina as a national unitary state of Muslims/Bosniaks, in which they are supremely sovereign and have the right to decide for the rest. The author thus considers sovereignty as something that can be confirmed and established by the declaration of a Communist republic assembly (p. 217). He does not take into account that a Communist republic assembly in former Yugoslavia was not legitimately elected, so that sovereignty must be partially usable in practice, not only on a piece of paper. Bosnia and Herzegovina was not sovereign in 1992 either, because the organized political power fell apart after the establishment of the Croatian Community Herceg-Bosna and the separation of the territories held by the Serbs. Glaurdić here again shows a basic misunderstanding of the situation by comparing Herceg-Bosna, which consistently supported the unity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its authority, to the Republika Srpska which openly challenged the unity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The central (Bosniak-majority) government of Bosnia and Herzegovina also lacked control of state organs of

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<sup>4</sup> Roudometof (2002): 20.

<sup>5</sup> Gibbs (2009).

coercion (police, military and territorial defence) on more than half of the territory claimed as their own. Besides this, in the referendum on independence day held on 29 February and 1 March 1992, at least one third of the population explicitly said that they did not want to live in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Both books are their authors' debut. Ivo Lučić showed innovation in providing new facts and the deconstruction of myths and stereotypes, providing a stimulus for new perspectives in this field. Josip Glaurdić reflects existing myths and stereotypes despite new literature, which is quite the opposite, providing an excellent example of what scientific historical work should not be.

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