

Slobodan Antonić

**THE IMPRISONED COUNTRY:
SERBIA UNDER THE GOVERNMENT OF SLOBODAN MILOŠEVIĆ**

(English *Summary* of the book: *Zarobljena zemlja: Srbija za vlade Slobodana Miloševića*, pp. 505-516, Beograd 2002: Otkrovenje¹)

The main objective of my book is to describe and determine the basis of Slobodan Milošević's system of personal rule in Serbia. More precisely, thematically speaking, to find out the causes that made a single person's authoritarian rule possible in Serbia - apparently with considerable popular support and for a whole decade after the fall of communism. In terms of methodology, this book is specific for multi-causal approach to the sociological explanation.

Adhering to the multi-causal approach, in the first part of the book, I set off by analyzing the *structural factors* that might had helped producing authoritarianism in the political sphere. Could the causes that were supporting Milošević's authoritarian rule be found among these elements?

Structural Factors

I first examined various *socio-economic factors*, such as: level of economic development, level of industrialization, and level of literacy, comparing Serbia to the neighbouring countries in Southeast Europe, and then to the countries in Latin America as well.

It turned out, however, that these elements could not explain the strength of authoritarianism in Serbia during the nineties. Seligson's margin for the survival of democracy (\$250 GNP per capita by the 1957 exchange rate, amounting to \$1442 by the 1997 exchange rate) was surpassed in Serbia a long time ago, in the mid 1950's, at about the same time as in Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania. At that time, the economic system in Serbia, as part of former Yugoslavia, possessed many traits of market economy that did not exist in other countries of communist East Europe: a commodities and services market, free labour employment, and a strong non-socialist private sector. (5/6 of the arable lands belonged to family holdings, and the private sector's part in the GNP was five times greater in Serbia than, for instance, in Czechoslovakia.) Serbia did not lag behind the neighbouring countries in industrial development either. The 50% margin of non-agricultural population was surpassed during the 1960's, and the 50% margin of literate population during the 1920's, at about the same time as in Bulgaria and Romania, and a little later than in Greece. By the time of the fall of communism at the close of the 1980's, according to these socio-economic indicators, Serbia was completely qualified for democratic development, so these

¹ For a review of this book see: Lukáš Vomlela, *Contemporary European Studies* 1/2007, pp. 77-79, <http://www.ces.upol.cz/pic/item/pdf/30.pdf>

elements can hardly explain the appearance or the endurance of Milošević's authoritarian rule.

The second structural element I explored was *social stratification*. At the outset, I believed that the weakness of the middle class in Serbia, and especially its rapidly declining economic position during the wars in former Yugoslavia in the 1990's, was one of the deepest sources of Milošević's authoritarian rule. However, after detailed consideration of all available data (especially the survey research results of Lazić et al. in 1993 and 1997), I was forced to modify my outlook. On the one hand, the middle class, shown by all surveys to be a staunch pro-democratic opponent of Milošević, does not include more than 20% of the Serbian population (40% in Greece). On the other hand, an application of the Alford index of class voting did not reveal any stronger inclination of the labour force for Milošević, either. (According to the survey research results from 1997, the Alford ICV for Serbia was less than 1!) And the middle and working class together form well over 60% of the Serbian population. Moreover, Rueschemeyer et al. concluded that the establishment and preservation of a democratic order were more often the result of an alliance between middle and working class, than the result of efforts of on middle class alone. Once this is taken into account, there is no reason left to base an explanation of Milošević's authoritarian rule on the theory of a weak middle class.

The third structural element I examined was *political culture*. I divided it into two sub-elements. I identified the first one as *authoritarian/democratic historical inheritance*. Namely, according to Kitschelt's concept of system time, democracy will stand for a greater chance of survival in countries with a longer parliamentary tradition during pre-communist times and a stronger pro-liberal opposition during the communist era. Conversely, more pre-1945 authoritarianism and fewer liberal groups before 1989 would indicate a greater chance for the establishment of an authoritarian system. In order to examine this sub-element, I undertook a comparative study of the political past of Serbia and the neighbouring countries (Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia). I calculated that, during the period between 1867 and 1989, Serbia had 62.74 years of authoritarian rule, 24.32 years of authoritarian rule with elements of parliamentarism, 24.47 years of parliamentary rule with elements of authoritarianism, and 0 years of full parliamentary government. The figures for Hungary are 42.04, 71.25, 0 and 0, for Romania: 46.23, 66.12, 3.49 and 0, Bulgaria: 70.29, 29.43, 12.59 and 0, etc. I formed an *Index of parliamentary tradition*, based on these figures, showing that Serbia did not lag behind the surrounding countries at all (with the exception of Greece). An analysis of other East European, formerly communist, countries would probably show a similar result (with the possible exception of Czechoslovakia). As for pro-liberal opposition groups, my analysis shows that, before 1987 (the year of Milošević's rise to power), Serbia had a more numerous and stronger liberal opposition to the communist regime than most of other East European countries, except Poland and, to some extent, Hungary.

The second sub-element of political culture that I considered was the so-called *authoritarian social character* of the population in Serbia. According to

some Serbian scholars (*i.e.* Z. Golubović), a distinct presence of authoritarianism (in Adorno's sense), detected by studies of social psychology from 1970 to the present day, offers an explanation why citizens of Serbia support Milošević's authoritarian rule. However, after closer examination of the results of these studies, I concluded that this explanation must also be rejected. First of all, because the results did not reveal any higher level of authoritarianism within the population of Serbia than in the neighbouring countries. (It should be noted that the level is lower in Serbia than in Greece, which has boasted of a stable democracy for the past quarter of a century.) Secondly, because a lot of items in Adorno scale basically measure current ideological positions (which can relatively easily be manipulated by political propaganda), rather than more stable dispositions of human behaviour. Susceptibility to authoritarianism, determined in this manner, cannot represent an independent variable that can be utilized to explain political behaviour.

Finally, during my work on this book, I realized that I must question the basic idea of popular support for Milošević's authoritarian regime. I analyzed the consecutive election results (1990, 1992, 1993, 1996 and 1997), as well as available public opinion polls (1990-2000).

The election results reveal that Milošević's regime enjoyed the support of a significant segment of Serbian population (about 40%) only until 1992. From 1992 onward, this support rapidly deteriorated, amounting to only 20% of the electorate in 1997. On the other hand, the systematic opposition to Milošević kept growing, and in 1997 it surpassed 40% of the electorate. The segment remaining to a full 100% includes the undecided ones and those who abstained. There are sufficient reasons to suppose that a large proportion of these voters was opposed to Milošević as well. As the research by Sajc revealed, the nature of non-voting in the nineties is best described as a "silent protest".

An accelerated collapse of the regime's social basis continued after 1997. According to the research by Mihailović and associates, dating from September 1999, 63% of the Serbian population was dissatisfied with the current government, while 61% no longer showed confidence in the institution of the President of FRY (*i.e.*, the office held by Slobodan Milošević). If these findings are compared to previous ones, made by the same team, it emerges that during the five year period 1994-1999, Milošević lost the confidence of one out of every two of his supporters (1994:49%, 1996:41%, 1997:29% and 1999:23%), while the proportion of the population that does not trust him increased by half (1994:42%, 1996:50%, 1997:61% and 1999:62%). Judging by the confidence his citizens reposed in him, Milošević was the last of all the presidents of the twelve other EE countries in transition.

In fact, it can be argued that, after 1993, Milošević stayed in power making a show of popular support, staging rigged and unfair elections, and by using means of political trickery (described later in detail).

Social Actors

How did Milošević manage to get the power and keep the power over the whole of Serbian society, even though structural reasons were not in his favour

and that his regime's social basis dwindled rapidly since 1992? What are the key mechanisms of his rule? Within the framework of my book, answering these questions included an analysis of the activity of social actors.

The analysis included members of the political, economic, academic and media elite during the period 1987-2000, and was based on the author's research of the political elite (1995), Lazić's researches of the economic and political elite (1993 and 1997), and other sources. The analysis revealed that, during the second half of the nineties, most of the social élites in Serbia have been accepting the basic democratic and liberal values, and that only a small segment of the élites supported Milošević's authoritarian system. However, when the foundations for Milošević's power were being laid at the turn of the eighties, the greatest part of the social élites either supported Milošević or stood by silently watching the events. And even though, by the middle of the nineties, the greatest part of the social élites started to oppose Milošević openly, demanding his withdrawal, the social system which had appeared meanwhile has been protecting Milošević efficiently. The key élites - economic, media and academic - have been highly dependent on the political elite, while the political elite has been under the control of one man - Milošević. The élites have become his hostages.

How did Milošević manage to do this and what kind of system did he build up?

The history of the Milošević's Serbia tells a story of an exceptionally ambitious political figure, which deftly took advantage of the structure's weaknesses and the specific historical circumstances. Namely, Milošević took the rule over the Serbian Communist Party in 1987, according to the cadre recruitment rules of all communist regimes. In this sense, he was no different than any other communist leader. Nevertheless, he showed great ambitions. When he took over the power in Central Serbia, he wanted to expand his rule to the whole Yugoslavia. At that point his personal characteristics stood out. He was bold, audacious and impudent, even ruthless. Since winning power in Yugoslavia meant taking over the Communist party, and since the Serbs formed a majority block in that party, Milošević decided to instrumentalize *Serb nationalism*.

Drawing such a powerful weapon was an exceptionally risky undertaking in the system of that time. It could have provoked a reaction from the hard-line gerontocracy, the living participants of the 1941-1945 civil war, who abided by Tito's vow to fight against every nationalism. But Milošević was bold and cunning. Aware of this danger, he represented his own actions as a return to Titoist roots, through the so-called anti-bureaucratic revolution. Nationalism was simply an accessory mean, the true purpose being winning back the people's confidence in the CP and its leadership.

At first sight, these objectives seemed completely contradictory. However, Milošević had one of the prime qualities of great seducers – the ability to make his victims believe his words more than their own eyes. Like Don Juan courting two ladies at the same time, assuring each of his fidelity and of the other one's madness, Milošević was simultaneously sending messages to the Titoist gerontocracy representing himself as a true communist temporarily pretending to be a nationalist, and to the Serb nationalist elite pretending to be a true nationalist, forced to pretend to be a communist for the time being. And both

sides believed him! Old Titoists didn't hinder him (some were even helping him!), while the national elite supported him wholeheartedly. In this way, Milošević achieved a fantastic success in the national-populist mobilization of Serbs.

Naturally, this venture was aided by some structural causes. First of all, Tito's communist regime rested on suppressing the nationalism of the biggest Yugoslav nationality and the slogan "Weak Serbia - Strong Yugoslavia". Serbian nationalism had been so radically suppressed that, for example, even songs with the word Serbia or the adjective "Serbian" were banned. Furthermore, even though the other Yugo-republics had significant national minorities as well, two autonomous provinces were formed only in Serbia, and in a functionally ridiculous manner - while the constituent provinces were given the right to participate in governing Serbia, Serbia itself had almost no authority over the provinces. Many Serbs therefore felt nationally frustrated. When Milošević launched his "anti-bureaucratic revolution", he allowed immediately all sorts of expressing the Serb national feelings and announced the return of Serbia's authority over its provinces.

However, nationalism is only a part of explanation of Milošević's success with the Serbs. The other part is that most people really believed in his "anti-bureaucratic revolution". His speeches were brilliant examples of populist sweet-mouthing, full of fiery criticisms of bureaucratic ossification and laments over the daily injustices befalling the people. Such words won people's hearts easily, so Milošević gained enormous popularity in 1988. Had, by any chance, even the most free of elections been held in Serbia at that time, Milošević would have won a convincing victory.

Thanks to this popularity, Milošević took control over the CPs of both Serbian provinces (Vojvodina and Kosovo) during 1988 and 1989, established a strong alliance with the Montenegrin CP and the CP in the Yugoslav army, and gained many followers among the Serb leaders in the CPs of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, just as he was getting ready to take over the Yugoslav CP and so get control over the whole country, the Berlin Wall crumbled. Instead of ruling Yugoslavia, Milošević had to worry about upholding his own legitimacy in Serbia itself.

However, his job in Serbia was made extremely easy by the support he enjoyed from the élites and the people. He therefore set out promptly to create new political structures. He took advantage of his enormous popularity, and, with the excuse of removing the last remnants of statehood from the provinces, declared a new constitution in 1990, before the first multi-party elections were held. According to this constitution, the most of governmental power was concentrated in the hands of the President of the Republic. And since Milošević still enjoyed popularity among the citizens of Serbia, the new President of the Republic, chosen on the December elections of 1990, became - he himself.

After securing the most important position in the power structure for himself, Milošević continued to rearrange the system, strengthen its authoritarian traits, as well as his own power. He first passed the new Election Law, giving party leaderships the right to replace any elected member of the Assembly. And since all decisions in the ruling Socialist Party of Serbia were

brought by Milošević himself, he thus took direct control over the whole governing political elite.

Secondly, Milošević stopped the process of privatization. Furthermore, he annulled all the privatization that had been carried out under the federal law of 1990 by passing the new law in 1994. Milošević thus gained control over 85% of the Serbian economy. He placed his own people on the top managerial positions, and they themselves created a complete clientist network. Presidents of the Assembly and the Cabinet, as well as most of the Cabinet ministers, were at the same time the general managers of the greatest and most profitable state companies, while the politically less influential figures were the managers of smaller companies. Since, under Serbian laws, company general managers have had the same rights as if they owned them; this created a typical prebendal system. As sovereign, Milošević bestowed the “leno” onto members of the politico-economic elite in exchange for their loyalty. These “industrial feudal lords” controlled all human and material resources further down the scale through an intricate network of personal loyalties.

Naturally, this fortification of Milošević's power did not take place without resistance. The liberal social elite - liberal segments of the political, economic, academic and media elites - rose against Milošević as early as 1992. After the Croatian and Bosnian war fiasco (1995), the nationalist elite also turned against Milošević. During the mass protests held in the winter of 1996/97, which lasted three whole months and in which hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated each and every day, the purely technocratic segments of the elites, people who thought of themselves as professionals, also turned their backs on Milošević. But all this was in vain. Milošević have had full control of the strongest social lever - the state. Through this lever he was, furthermore, able to retaliate and even further strengthen his own power.

During 1998 and 1999, Milošević managed to further the principle of clientist loyalty into all public institutions. There were no more employment or job advancement for people who were not part of Milošević's clientist network. This held true for the army and police force, for judges and professors, for blue collars and white collars. New laws were passed for the universities, for the public media, for public office, for the courts... Their basic common characteristic was clientism. The government controlled everything. Directly or indirectly, it was appointing university professors, judges, journalists... Your professional advancement depended solely on loyalty to the Milošević family. If you constantly made public vows of your loyalty to Milošević, you could advance in rank three times in four years, from colonel to three-star general and Chief of Staff (like Nebojša Pavković). In the same tone, all you had to do was to be loyal to Milošević and his family, and you could become President of the Supreme Court without even being a lawyer (like Balša Govedarica). You could become a university professor, even if you had practically no teaching experience and very questionable scientific qualifications (Vojislav Šešelj) if you were close enough to the power structures. And so forth.

Thus, by the end of the nineties, Milošević had built a stalwart system of clientism. He managed to implement it to chain the whole social elite. There were, in fact, important segments of the social elite in Serbia that were showing

strong resistance to Milošević's regime. However Milošević had successfully limited their financial and organizational independence. He controlled not only the greatest part of the Serbian economy (85%), but also, through the institutions that control monetary transactions, he had information about every financial resource of the opposition social elite. For instance, a company that dared to help, or even only dealt with the social opposition was risking to expose itself to rude chicanery. The chicanery have been carried through by the financial police, economic inspections or revenue service, or by a business boycott by state-owned companies and institutions. Part of the anti-Milošević social elite compensated the loss of domestic financial sources by turning more and more to foreign funds. However, this only strengthened the state propaganda description of Milošević's opponents as "foreign mercenaries".

Milošević have been compensating his loss of popularity not only by radically strengthening clientism, but also by strengthening the repressive mechanisms of the system. The police force has been militarized and outside the framework of the legal system. The courts and public prosecutors have been under strict supervision of the Ministry of Justice, so they were no longer independent. Judges and attorneys who were showing the slightest sign of disloyalty to the government were promptly disbarred (as in the case of Zoran Ivošević, judge of the Supreme Court, or Slobodan Vučetić, judge of the Constitutional Court). The media have especially been exposed to repression after the infamous Law on Public Media had been passed. According to this law, any criticism of the government, or even reporting someone else's criticism, was considered an offence and attack on the constitutional order. Court hearings were held within 24 hours and the verdict was carried out in the same time limit, without the usual subpoenas and presence of the defendant, etc. This enabled a quick and efficient punishment of any opposition reporting. Unexplained murders of politically prominent people and incidents involving para-police groups beating up citizens caught tearing regime posters or demonstrating against the government were becoming more and more frequent.

Milošević's regime had thus acquired many characteristics of a typical authoritarian regime. True enough, the system was still incorporating regular elections and political opposition. But election results were obeyed only if Milošević winning. On both occasions when Milošević lost, the elections were either annulled (the local elections in 1996) or falsified (the presidential elections in 1997). The opposition was tolerated only while weak and divided. Electoral conditions were becoming more and more unfavourable. The electoral units and methods were modified on the eve of an election, according to the best interests of Milošević's party. The opposition have had more and more difficulty in controlling the voting and the vote counting.

However, confident of himself and of his system, Milošević made a vital error, in the mid-2000. He decided to change the constitution and to win the presidential election one more time. The opposition was factious, the people were apathetic - it seemed to him nothing could endanger his victory. In reality, the Serbs have had enough of Milošević. When most of the opposition united and nominated honest and consistent Vojislav Koštunica for a presidential candidate, citizens got a chance, finally, to vote for someone who represented a serious

alternative to Milošević. Milošević underestimated Koštunica, and did not believe he could possibly win. Therefore, he did not prepare any particular strategy for electoral forgery. He thought that his propaganda, with usual manipulations with ballots (e.i. additional 100-200,000 votes for Milošević), would be sufficient to enable him to win. In reality, on the 24 September 2000, Koštunica got 650,000 votes more than Milošević did! Milošević hesitated to acknowledge his defeat for ten days. Finally, he annulled the elections. This led to the Fifth October Revolution. In one day, and practically without bloodshed, Milošević was overthrown.

How did it happen that his regime, which seemed very firm, broke so rapidly? During those ten days, while Milošević was hesitating, the whole elite deserted him. The police offered hardly any resistance to the attacks of rebels, and the Army refused to intervene. Why did Milošević's elite scattered? The members of his elite had used to believe that Milošević had had the West against him, but that many people had been for him. Now they realised that Milošević could not count on anyone any more. They feared it was all up with Milošević. And the moment they feared so, it was all up with him in reality as well. Namely, an authoritarian regime is solid as much as its members are willing to defend it. At that crucial moment, Milošević's elite lost self-confidence and faith in the regime. Its indecisiveness to use force turned into dumb watching the rebellion soon and finally into collaboration with the rebels as well.

That is how it happened that, after eleven years, the most long-lived post-communist authoritarian regime in Eastern Europe was overthrown.

Character of Milošević's Regime

During its first period (1988-1993), *i.e.* during his rise and wide popularity, Milošević's regime can be considered a *caesaristic regime*, characterized by an authoritarian personal rule nonetheless supported by a certain proto-democratic legitimacy. But after the mass demonstrations, lasting three months (1996/1997) and revealing the opposition's true strength in the cities, and the poor results of the 1997 parliamentary elections, it became obvious that Milošević's regime no longer had even proto-democratic legitimacy. During 1998 and 1999 Milošević, therefore, began strengthening the regime's repressive traits and radically enforcing its clientist structure. The system in Serbia thus began acquiring more and more traits of a *sultanistic regime*.

Of course, such developments have had extremely negative consequences for the transition to democracy. While caesarism leaves some of society's basic democratic potentials unscathed (economic and social pluralism, social elites' independence, office professionalism, etc.), sultanism systematically destroys every existing civil and pro-democratic social base from the sheer necessity of making clientism the prevalent functional principle for all social elements. Therefore, with his solid new political constructs, all Milošević had to do was to wait for the structures to do their job. For the citizens to become even more pauperized, until the *per capita* national income falls below the previously mentioned level necessary for support of democracy. For ethnic tensions to arise even in places where there were none at that time (in Vojvodina). For re-

traditionalization and authoritarian civil socialization in a new social order to form a truly authoritarian social character of the Serbian population. For political socialization to finish building an authoritarian political and social elite. For clientism to penetrate every factory and school, every court room and police station, every university and newspaper. Until Serbia perhaps even forgets it ever had any notion of democracy and a democratic life.

However, Milošević did not understand the nature of his own regime. Psychologically, he was still living in a caesaristic phase. He was convinced his popularity was so great that it would be sufficient just to turn out at the elections so to smash out any rival. Only when the election results started to come, on the 24 September, Milošević became aware he could stay in power only by finishing a sultanistic regime - by criminalising the opposition. However, it was already too late. The Fifth October Revolution could not be stopped any more.

Actors and Structures

The whole story about Milošević's Serbia is, in fact, a story about the changing relationship between social actors and structures. At the beginning of this story, we see different sides of, even different potentials of social structures, appearing behind the cracks of the communist system. At the end of the eighties, Serbia has a strong potential for development towards democracy. But it also has those unfavourable structural elements which can favour political authoritarianism. The stage is set for the appearance of a specific actor whose field of possibilities, thanks to loosened and weakened political structure, is unusually wide. His influence on political structure rests on successful activation of certain parts of the social structures. Since the actor himself wants to shape a new authoritarian, not democratic, structure, he starts to awaken and stimulate those elements which are ripe for authoritarian possibilities. Nationalism and populism until 1990, and war and martial law since 1991, represent the main intermediaries and instigators between this ever more powerful authoritarian actor and the growing authoritarian elements of the structure. In their interaction, this actor manages to shape and strengthen a new authoritarian political structure. And when, after 1993, the legitimate basis of his power starts to dissipate, he uses this new structure to continue repressing the every existing democratic potentials in society.

Of course, Milošević was not the only actor who contributed to such developments. Other actors belonging to the social elite also contributed the Serbian transition from one type of authoritarianism to another. First of all, Tito himself - when he purged the Serb political elite from its liberal and modernizing cadre at the beginning of the seventies. Then there are the members of the post-Tito communist nomenclature who pushed Milošević into prominence (1984-1987) believing that he would strengthen the stumbling communist system. Then, there are those members of the social elites who, for a long while, represented the mainstay of the anticommunist opposition in Serbia and who supported Milošević's blazing up the Serb nationalism, believing that it would bring about irretrievable damage to the communist system. Then there are those members of the democratic opposition who, during most of the multi-party period (1990-

1995), accepted Milošević's nationalist "discourse", omitting to look for a key which would attract the peasantry, unqualified workers, population out of the big cities, the "ordinary people" as a whole, to the idea of democracy. Finally, those members of the democratic opposition who, after being given the great chance to topple the regime already tottering, after the winter protests of 1996/1997, manifested extraordinary selfishness and short-sightedness, thus prolonging Milošević's rule for at least several years.

But all these actors who are also responsible for nowadays authoritarianism in Serbia, are significant only to the extent they had connection with Milošević, to which they represented a real counter-force, they could really have hindered or stopped him. Milošević himself remains the central actor and the key for finding an answer to the question why Serbia developed in an authoritarian direction in the 1990s. A single person proved to be more important, not only more than other social actors, but more than the structures as well.

Such a finding, from the point of view of the usual sociological approach, is not easily acceptable. Except for the few representatives of the other extreme (Carlyle), social scientists have for a long time felt uncomfortable when significant changes of social structures had to be explained by the influence of a single person, whatever his political importance. However, in the case of *societies in transition*, it seems that actors can become more important than structures. For example, the outset and victory of the communist revolution in Russia can hardly be imagined without the influence of one man - Vladimir Ilich Lenin. In the same vein, regardless of the level of decay of the communist systems, the *moment* and *manner* of the downfall of communism simply cannot be explained without the influence of Mikhail Gorbachev. During periods when certain systems are in the process of appearing or disappearing, the role of social actors, even single persons, grows. During periods of system stability, structures dominate over actors, repelling anyone who breaks their iron rules. On the other hand, during periods of transition, when the structures of one system are weakened and the structures of the other are still not fully functional, single actors have a chance to affect decisively the dismantling of existing and building up new social structures. This is similar to what Elster, Offe, and Preuss called *backward linkages* in their analysis of the relationship between social constructs and actors.

In this sense, sociological studying of the East European "transition" is not the same thing as a research of a stable social system. Societies in transition reflect a sociological picture of a true outburst of new social actors, new rules, behaviours, flows, even values and means. To a sociologist used to seeing structures dominating over actors, this might seem to be quite a chaotic and inexplicable phenomenon. Nevertheless, it can be argued that, during such *constitutionalizing* times, there appears a "warped" form of social causality with an inverted epistemological inclination (from the standpoint of "usual" sociology at least), being turned towards actors and not towards the structures. Namely, in times of transition there is a growing frequency of so-called "bifurcation points" that abound with different possibilities for further developments. At these points, the field for ruling elites' shaping activity is widening extremely. Furthermore,

the direction of further historical development may depend on a very small circle of people as well, even on one single actor or often on quite trivial details.

Conclusions

There are several significant research findings presented in this book.

1. A heterogeneous ethnic structure can have a negative effect on the transition from authoritarian to democratic society. The authoritarian segment of the political elite utilizes, as a rule, nationalist passions in order to gain additional populist legitimacy. This is why, in countries with considerable ethnic minorities, there is a possibility for authoritarian populism to prevail, *i.e.* for transition to democracy to slow down (like Slovakia, Bulgaria, Croatia or Romania) or even stop completely (Serbia). However, this is only one of the factors which can help explaining the fate of democratic transition in a particular country.
2. It is confirmed that, in transitional societies, the role of social actors becomes more important than the role of structures. During periods of system stability the structures are dominating over their actors, while in periods of transition, when the structures weaken, the actors get a chance to influence decisively the shaping of new social structures/system. During such *constitutive* times, there is a “warped” form of causality, oriented towards the actors and not the structures. During periods of transition, the ruling elites get maximal opportunities for modeling activity. The direction of further historic development often depends on a very small circle of people, one person only, or even some trivial details.
3. Transition is not an uniform and unidirectional process. It can lead from authoritarianism to democracy, but it can also lead from one form of authoritarianism to another. Serbia is an example of the latter kind of transformation. In this case, the starting point of transition had been a regime of mature post-totalitarianism, followed by a caesaristic regime, which was taking a form of sultanistic one in 1998. The structural components (except one - ethnic heterogeneity) *per se* are not responsible for such transformation. Responsibility mainly rests on one actor, and the wrong decision made by a part of the social elites.
4. A comparison with Belorussia and the regime of Alexander Lukashenko confirms the importance of individual actors during the first stages of transition. As in the case of Milošević's Serbia, shaping of the new authoritarian order in Belorussia, especially after 1996, was the result of efforts of one social actor in the conditions of weakened socio-political structures and inadequate actions taken by social elites.
5. After consolidation of the new order, the structures gain precedence over actors again, limiting the field for their action. Possibilities for further transformation of Serbia, with its sultanistic regime (1998-2000), were becoming more and more limited. The economic and social basis necessary for a democratic order had largely been

destroyed, while the structural factors were pushing the country in the direction of authoritarian political options. Fortunately, Milošević was overthrown at the last minute, a little while before the regime was completed. And before the structures could begin to work in his favour.

6. As in the life of an individual, there are certain life opportunities in the life of a nation, which, if not taken properly, can hardly happen again. In the case of the EE societies, it seems that the first one or two years of transition, as well as the one or two years that preceded the collapse of communism, represented such chance of a lifetime, historical turning point at which the state of affairs of the following decade was decided. Milošević's Serbia was making amends for the mistakes made during these several crucial years.

ABSTRACT

The author explores the sources and mechanisms of Milošević's personal rule in Serbia. The multi-causal approach is applied. Both social structures and actors are analyzed.

Structural components which could have led to Milošević's authoritarian regime are: the level of economic and social development, the class and ethnic structure, democratic tradition in the pre-communist era, the liberal opposition during the communist era, and the "social character" of the population. The analysis reveals there was only one component which might have encouraged authoritarianism - the marked heterogeneous ethnic structure. According to all the other parameters, it turns out not only that Serbia (in 1989) did not lag behind the most of other EE countries, but that in many ways it used to have even greater potential for democratic transition.

The analysis has to turn to actors, i.e. political and other elites and the most powerful person. A large segment of the elites used to support Milošević's "anti-bureaucratic revolution". They realized their mistake too late. Utilizing the initial support from both the elites and the general public, he built an authoritarian system, based on state property and clientism.

Therefore, Serbia under Milošević is an impressive example of the importance of social actors, prevailing over the significance of social structures during times of transition.

Keywords: structures and actors, personal rule, caesarism, sultanism, transition, Serbia.

Translated by Aleksandra Sajc