

Nick Miller, *The Nonconformists: Culture, Politics, and Nationalism in a Serbian Intellectual Circle, 1944-1991*. (Budapest-New York: CEU Press, 2007).

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The collapse of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s has by now been thoroughly analyzed by journalists, social scientists and historians. An entire spectrum of theories about conspiracy theories have emerged, varying from interpreting the break up of Yugoslavia as a byproduct of 'ancient hatreds' all the way to looking at it as a mere power struggle between former-communists-turned-nationalists. It is impossible to understand the break up of Yugoslavia without having to go back at least to the Second World War. Once the 50 years between the formation and the collapse of Yugoslavia are analyzed, including the gradual rise of nationalism in the 1970s and 1980s, the picture becomes somewhat clearer.

Nick Miller's *The Nonconformists* is a book based on his 1999 article of the same name published in the *Slavic Review*. In his book, Miller looks at the works of some leading Serbian intellectuals, but pays most attention to Dobrica Cosic, Mica Popovic, and Borislav Mihajlovic Mihiz and attempts to decipher the motives that led to the transformation of loyal communists into nationalists. He is clearly critical of the three main assumptions to the collapse of Yugoslavia; the power relations in the state; the historical analogy; and the assumption that Serbs have *always* been aggressive and xenophobic.

Miller starts by pointing out to a particular event in the 1960s – the failure of the League of Writers to break down barriers and reorganize along aesthetic criteria instead of being limited to regional associations – as having quite an impact on Cosic. After this failure, Cosic's faith in the Yugoslav communist supranational state began dwindling and he started feeling that further divisions in Yugoslavia would continue to the detriment of the *Serbian* nation.

Another example that Miller illustrates is a lecture delivered by Cosic titled 'How we view ourselves' (180) which pointed to a new direction in Cosic's line of thought: he increasingly started showing signs of abandoning Yugoslavism and drifting towards the reaffirmation of Serbian culture and national identity.

Miller's work shows that Cosic felt that the Serbian nation was being fragmented and was threatened under communist Yugoslavia and hence it further convinced him of the need to preserve the Serbian national identity and culture. In the 1970s along with increasing Croatian national demands, Cosic even began feeling that Serbs were the actual victims of Tito's regime.

Along similar lines Miller follows the works of Mica Popovic, a painter, who also roughly at the same time began to doubt the abilities of the communist Yugoslav regime to respond to the demands of its people and of its state of being. Popovic, as his work suggested, seemed to have been leaning towards three specific points: firstly, he explored explicitly Serbian topics; secondly, he began introducing a message of 'anti-totalitarianism,' and thirdly; his works suggested disappointment with what the communist regime failed to achieve by questioning the communists' promise for a better and more rational future (227).

A friend of Dobrica Cosic and Mica Popovic, Borislav Mihajlovic Mihiz did not indulge in romanticizing the image of Serbs as did Cosic with his image of the Serb peasant. Rather, he associated bad behavior and negative traits to other Yugoslav people. As Miller shows, Mihiz - although no nationalist himself - was also something of a disappointed leftist and what disappointed him most was the authoritarianism of the Yugoslav regime and its impact on the Serbs.

Miller's aim throughout the book is to prove that Serbian nationalism was neither inherited nor ancient. He employs a critical literary analysis of an impressive number of books, articles and speeches and arranges them in such a way that he almost proves his point.

Miller draws a number of conclusions on the three intellectuals he studied. Firstly, the negative responses of the Serbian intellectuals were a result of developments in Yugoslavia and were originally rational. Secondly, their focus was on culture and they did not attempt to gain power or at least it wasn't their primary goal. Thirdly, their work was introspective rather than aggressive. And fourthly, Miller claims that although Cosic, Popovic, and Mihiz argued for continuity with the Serbian past, they never did so as manipulators or propagandists.

However, some of Miller's conclusions are debatable. One such conclusion is when he compares Adam Michnik and Vaclav Havel to Dobrica Cosic. He rightly claims that all the three mentioned recognized, on time, the unpleasantness of the Stalinist regimes and they all sought truth. Yet, Michnik and Havel were considered humanists, while Cosic a bloodthirsty nationalist (350). This was perhaps an abrupt conclusion and there are a number of books by authors such as Milorad Tomanic (*Serbian church at war, and the war within it*), Norman Cigar (*Genocide in Bosnia*) and David Bruce Macdonald (*Balkan Holocausts*) which showed or at least mentioned otherwise the role played by the intellectuals in the Yugoslav breakup and the subsequent wars.

The other pitfall of the book is that Miller analyzes the works of Serbian intellectuals during a period of accelerated collapse of Yugoslavia and makes hardly any mention of the bloody war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Kosovo, although it is a known fact that intellectuals played a significant role in spurring national emotions leading up to the war and some even played a crucial role in justifying killings.

The Non-Conformists is not a book for absolute beginners on Yugoslavia, it is based on an enormous amount of well researched literature and provides an in-depth analysis that no other book has done in the recent past. Unlike a number of books on Balkan nationalism which are more often than not mere commentaries based on secondary and tertiary sources, this book is an originally styled and worthy piece of work

based on less known and little researched primary sources. However, a significant amount of literature ought to be read before this book could be understood and rightfully comprehended. The author offers neither an introduction nor a conclusion; rather he gives the reader the freedom to individually conclude the evolution of nationalism in a Serbian intellectual circle.

David J. Galbreath, *Nation-Building and Minority Politics in Post-Socialist States, Interests, Influences and Identities in Estonia and Latvia*, (Stuttgart: Ibidem Verlag, 2005).

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After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, former Soviet Republics were facing the challenge of building/rebuilding a nation. Authoritarianism, colonialism and command economy were dropped on behalf of democracy, de-colonization and market economy. This affected not only the newly nationalizing states, including the case studies presented in this book, Estonia and Latvia, but also the "25 million Russophones living outside Russia". The nation-building process was a result of historical grievances from the part of the titular communities, which lead to nationalist movements and to a growing importance of ethnicity in politics.

David J. Galbreath tests the conditions under which minority politics can best be understood by analyzing events in Estonia and Latvia in the period following the reestablishment of independence until the withdrawal of the permanent OSCE missions. His book, *Nation-Building and Minority Politics in Post-Socialist States – Interests, Influences and Identities in Estonia and Latvia*, focuses on the process of minority politics in the two Baltic States by adding to Brubaker's "triadic nexus" - which contains the interplay of nationalizing states,