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The Hot Vojvodina Summer Of 1988: Did Vojvodinians Seek to Overthrow Their Government?

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Abstract

Several watershed events preceded the dissolution of Yugoslavia. One of these was the toppling of the Vojvodina autonomist leadership in October 1988. This was preceded by a series of rallies throughout Vojvodina in the summer of 1988, which may have seemed like a spontaneous affair and the work of “ordinary citizens.” It was called “the antibureaucratic revolution.” However, these rallies, including a standing group of demonstrators, continually and always referring to the grievances of Kosovo Serbs, turned out to be supported by the Serbian political elite centered in Belgrade. The elite, still headed by the Serbian Communist Chief Slobodan Milošević, gave thrust and coordination to efforts to organize the rallies. The Vojvodina leadership was toppled for their alleged “failing to understand the plight of Kosovo Serbs.” The overthrow was, further, with a view to achieve the Serbian elite’s pet project, the “united Serbia”—that is, doing away with Vojvodina’s and Kosovo’s autonomy. Written sources (including recollections by Yugoslav leaders of the time) and written sources are considered in research on the events.

Keywords: Central Europe; communist; consociation; nationalism; political behavior

Introduction

The Yugoslav dissolution has merited serious analysis in a rich library of scholarly works. Scholars have dealt with not only political aspects (Gagnon 2004; Bunce 2001) but also historical aspects (Ramet 2006), the concept and failure of Yugoslavism (Djokić 2003), culture (Wachtel 1998), the economy (Woodward 1995), legal aspects (Radan 2002; Dugard 2013), the international context, and the appropriateness or inappropriateness of international community reactions (for one line of thinking see Glaurdić 2011; for another, see Radeljić 2012), and nationalism studies (Malešević 2002; Malešević 2006), among others. Monographs reviewing scholarly literature have also been published (Ramet 2005; Bieber, Galijaš, and Archer 2014).

However abundant the treatment of the Yugoslav dissolution, the issue of whether and how the Vojvodina government was overthrown in October 1988 remains unclear. Was the series of anti-Provincial government rallies in the summer of 1988 staged and organized from without? This is not just another detail in the Yugoslav dissolution saga, as without this step, Milošević would have remained in a minority position within the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY). Moreover, although the LCY would not last much longer (until January 1990), the moment of the overthrow was crucial because Milošević’s antibureaucratic revolution (AR) gave him a strong impetus and rendered impossible negotiations among the republics. In fact, the AR made war much more likely, not only for greater confrontation, but also for having collected a group ready to fight on one side. All means would be allowed in politics after these rallies.

In 1988, the year under discussion, the Yugoslav League of Communists remained nominally in power as the sole party. However, the republic branches were independent, with the divisions between them overt, relating to basic issues, including how Yugoslavia was to be constituted and whether to introduce a multiparty system. For some time, the political and economic system had malfunctioned (Haug 2012, 345–48; for closeups, see Dizdarević 1999; Čolak 2017; Mužević 2021). Milošević, who became president of the Serb Communists in 1986, initiated the elaboration of a Yugoslav constitutional draft, with the legislature being established on a “one man–one vote” principle, thus giving Serbs and Serbia an advantage over the then existing system of parity of republics and provinces (Ribarić 2015, 280–81) and altering the balance between them. This Milošević move, still in its early stages at the time, worried many republic communist elites, the Slovenian most of all. Although Milošević was to change this part of the political system, he would not, at the time, allow for a multiparty system, which was already favored in Slovenia. In 1988, the Yugoslavs were frustrated by the country’s economic problems and the deterioration of their standard of living since the beginning of the decade; in 1987, in a large sample of adults, 65% of Yugoslav adults “blamed professional politicians for existing economic hardship” (Jambreč et al. 1987, question 4334). This clearly had important consequences for their understanding of political life. Yugoslavs were deeply dissatisfied with the political establishment’s inability to undertake necessary change, and a state of uncertainty and precariousness was already in the air. Thus, they were ready to consider completely different types of political organization. Self-management, never fully implemented and partly serving as a decoration, was losing its attraction for people. The masses were ready to consider various new political ideas.

Under precarious living conditions, the Yugoslav political elites failed to propose substantive economic or political change, let alone adopt any. They were unable to offer even more of the same, the improved operation of the existing state of institutions, way of life, and standard of living. Nationalists from all ethnic groups started using various forms of fear mongering in national mobilization. Ethnic entrepreneurs were active in the public arena, offering strange goods to attract public interest: The Holy Mary apparitions in Herzegovina had a national flavor, as did the traveling exhibition of Prince Lazar’s relics, and in Kosovo, strange illnesses seemed always to attack a single ethnic group (Hay and Foram 1991, 1196).

At that time, a Serbian protest movement, originating in Kosovo, played the tune of dissatisfaction with the Serb position in Kosovo. Its unusual displacement brought rallies to Vojvodina in the summer of 1988, hundreds of miles away from Kosovo. This further brought the downfall of Vojvodina communist leadership. This was also important because Vojvodina “held one of eight votes” in the consociational arrangement of Yugoslavia. For example, Janez Stanovnik, then president of Slovenia, expressed fear that a Milošević victory by rallies removing communist leaderships would change the delicate balance of power in Yugoslavia (Hudelist 1989, 167). Stanovnik pondered only Croatia and Slovenia would withstand the further pressure of rallies and not establish a Milošević puppet regime. In this sense, these rallies can certainly be viewed as a deterioration of the Yugoslav situation, antagonizing the public in Slovenia and Croatia and hastening the way to their secession. The AR subsequently moved on, particularly to Montenegro, which is beyond the scope of this study.

In this paper, the peculiar situation in Serbia, with a special view of Vojvodina in 1988, the period of the AR, will be dealt with: the rallies, media articulation, and involvement of the Serbian political elite in the AR. The AR may have had other aspects for which refined explanations have been provided (Archer 2019; Musić 2019), particularly public unrest elsewhere; however, in this paper we focus on it in Vojvodina. The issue of whether the Vojvodina rallies were a down-up or top-down affair will be in the center of interest.

Method

The research for this paper was conducted using methods suited to the subject: discovering the true movers of rallies and of the toppling of the Vojvodina leadership in 1988. Written sources were

researched, and interviews were carried out with competent persons. The persons chosen were all well informed either as politicians or as observers in Novi Sad. Attention was paid to their objectivity, although that did not prove to be problematic. The problem was to find more true information, which may be still well hidden in Belgrade (state security files are mostly unavailable in the State Archives of Serbia [visited]). Some people in Belgrade are still not ready to speak. This means that it was hypothesized that the true forces behind the toppling were not a spontaneous movement of a dissatisfied people, as often claimed—although there was general dissatisfaction and frustration.

We conducted interviews with Želimir Žilnik, film director from Novi Sad, and with six political insiders at the time (summer 1988): an undersecretary of Internal Affairs, the president of the Vojvodina Provincial Assembly, three were members of the Vojvodina League of Communists Presidency, one of which was the Socialist Youth leader at the time, who also sat on the Serbian League of Communists Central Committee (CC). Our interviews took more hours each, focusing on the rallies and explaining their organization. Notes were taken and kept by the author. With the undersecretary and one of the members, interviews were continued to reach depth. They all took place in Novi Sad in autumn 2021 and in January 2022. The interview with the last interviewee took place in the summer, 2022. There was a public session on October, 16, 2021, devoted to the rallies' topic, organized by the Vojvođanski klub, where the one time assembly president, the internal affairs undersecretary and a member of the party presidency made their recollections public (https://www.facebook.com/vojvodjanskiklub/?locale=sr_RS).

Serbian Particularities

In studies of Yugoslav dissolution, studies of Serbia at the time occupy what might be called a subfield (Dragović-Soso 2002; Ramet 2004, 2005; Grdešić, 2019a). Serbia is also discussed in several biographies of its leader, Slobodan Milošević, whose life attracted an unusual number of portrayals (Djukić 2001; LeBor 2002; Sell 2002). Serbia was the largest Yugoslav republic, but it was also uniquely organized within the Yugoslav federation, subsequent to the 1971 Constitutional amendments (codified by the last Yugoslav Constitution of 1974). Its two provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina, while remaining part of Serbia, attained the status of federal constituents within a very decentralized scheme. Milošević appeared as the most daring leader on the Yugoslav scene in the late 1980s. He slowly transferred from standard communist to national narrative. (Already on April 4, 1987, he invoked “ancestors would not forgive Serbs,” if they moved out of Kosovo, when Kosovo Serb leaders toyed with the idea of collectively leaving Kosovo.)

The two provinces differed considerably: Vojvodina was to the north of Serbia proper, with an Austro-Hungarian past, a complex ethnic composition, and Serbian majority (54% according to the 1981 Census), whereas Kosovo was to the south, with an Albanian majority (77% in 1981), and had been part of the Ottoman Empire until Serbia took over in 1912. The leaderships of the two provinces were not prepared for any substantive concessions on their status, Vojvodina being the more steadfast of the two, until the AR.

This decentralization was basically in response to strong demands from Kosovo's Albanian majority for full republic status (entailing the right to secede), which was never to be achieved under Yugoslavia (dissolved 1991–1992). Prior to this advance in 1971, there were some longings from the Vojvodina elite to strengthen the province's position.

The 1971–74 arrangement soon resulted in dissatisfaction among the Serbian intellectual and political elite, who demanded that the republic have all powers within its territory, “like all other republics” and that provinces would be stripped of their power. This was elaborated in an analysis prepared for Serbian leadership in 1977 titled the “Constitutional Status of Serbia” (Petranović and Zečević 1988, 635–38). The analysis was couched in Aesopian language, but it was clear from the inception what the Serbian political elite sought. For example, the original analysis stated, “the constitutional foundation for the implementation of unity of Serbia is very restrictive and modest”

(Petranović and Zečević 1988, 635). In this analysis, the Serbian elite elaborated its displeasure with the lack of prerogatives in the provinces and sought to reclaim them.

The discussion did not go public until 1981, when unrest broke out in Kosovo, and the Serbian leadership linked two issues: Kosovo unrest was somehow to have been enabled by the Republic, which lacked authority within the province. To put it bluntly, Serbia was unable by police power to crush the demonstrations and impose repression. On December 24, 1981, the patriarch of Serbian politics Petar Stambolić lamented at a CC session, “In practice the bases of a united system are contested within Serbia [by provinces]. In this way [by the constitutional arrangement] the Serbian national state is contested” (Petranović and Zečević 1988, 638). At the same session in 1981, for example, Ivan Stambolić, a then rising Serb politician, complained about how, owing to constitutional provisions, Republic security forces were not allowed to intervene directly (but only within a federal force) to put down the rebellion in 1981 in Kosovo (655).

Federal reactions to the Kosovo Albanian unrest involved the imposition of martial law and a subsequent a series of measures, particularly in the area of education. These measures were in different ways repressive and restrictive for Albanians: many school principals were replaced, some school textbooks were banned, the number of places in higher education institutions became biased against the national sciences (language, history), and the number of places with Albanian as the teaching language was reduced in favor of Serbian (Kostovicova 2005, 65). Eight hundred Albanian teachers were dismissed from their jobs. Criminal prosecution of Albanians for political activity was widespread: according to one count, 4,000 young people were “sent to prison” between 1981 and 1986 (Meier 1999, 32), to which those of other ages and those sent previously and subsequently should be added.

Among the federal units, there was little interest in joining the measures implemented in Kosovo, except for Serbia (and partly in Macedonia). Thus, federal measures boiled down to Serbian measures and Serbia regaining power over Kosovo. The reversals in political leverage during the 1980s in Kosovo varied. Note the symbolic one dealing with *The Yugoslav Encyclopedia* II. The first volume contained the entry “Albanian” and “Albanian-South Slav relations.” This was the subject of dispute between the Serbian editors and the Kosovo Albanian editors. The latter had the upper hand in the final text because they had jurisdiction. This was the case in the first volume published in 1980. However, after the special measures in Kosovo in 1981, the Serbian editors imposed a review and mandated a different text, which was subsequently sewed into the first volume. The second edition of the *Yugoslav Encyclopedia* was never completed.

Changes in Kosovo education during the 1980s were to have improved the position of Serbs and stop their emigration. However, both groups felt insecure in the joint system of education, which in 1990 would lead to Albanians quitting this system of education and establishing a private one, not under Belgrade teaching programs and not financed or housed by Belgrade authorities. The presence of a special-force federal police was of no help. Albanians feared them, whereas Serbs did not feel satisfied or secure. However, repressive measures undertaken in 1981 brought further deterioration on the ground, along with mistrust between the two ethnic groups (Pavlović 2009, 49–50). In Kosovo, this would culminate in imagined or simply fake “epidemics,” to pinpoint the alleged crimes committed by the other group’s medical staff (Hay and Foran 1991). This issue was also addressed by Serbian Orthodox Church prelates, who spoke in theological terms about Serbian martyrdom in Kosovo (*Pravoslavljje*, May 15, 1983).

The Serbian Movement in Kosovo

During the 1980s, a small group of Serbs in Kosovo, particularly Kosovo Polje, began to gather and discuss what they considered their purportedly untenable, persecuted position. Their activities prior to 1988 did not amount to much: discussions, several petitions, and one demonstration outside Kosovo. There was a visit to Belgrade in 1986, where they were received by the president of the Federal Assembly at the time, an ethnic Albanian, Iliaz Kurteshi. The crux of the issue was the

diminishing proportion of Serbs in the Kosovo population. At the time, Serbs comprised approximately one-seventh of the Kosovo population (1981: 13.2%), and their share in the Kosovo population had been steadily decreasing since the end of World War II, which could be considered a founded grievance. The movement acquired power and attention in the summer 1988 when it was moved to Vojvodina, purportedly to seek expressions of solidarity there.

The Serbian movement of the 1980s has attracted scholarly attention. Ramet wrote of the rallies as “ostensibly spontaneous ... but carefully organized” (2005, 56). In *Balkan Babel* she wrote, “Milošević mobilized several hundred Serbs from Kosovo, who were brought to Novi Sad ... where they organized two days of anti-government protests” (1996, 29). In 2011, Glaurdić claimed that “there was nothing spontaneous in the rallies’ organization and timing” (29). Bennett also wrote, “there was nothing spontaneous ... they were carefully stage managed” (1995, 98). Even Pavlowitch, in his history in Serbia, was considered so (2002, 194). However, authors who particularly dealt with the topic of Serbian AR took a different stand.

Vladislavjević’s monograph on this issue focuses on the Kosovo Serb movement of grievances. He claims that “the agency of ordinary people in Kosovo, Vojvodina, Montenegro, and central Serbia was central to the rise and expansion of protest” (2008, 5). Although he would not say elites were completely irrelevant, he goes as far as to hold that he demonstrated that “the argument that ordinary people are incapable of coherent political action without the involvement of elites is deeply flawed” (198).

Another author who focused on Serbian AR was Grdešić. He focused on “eventfulness”: “Analysis of contention and mass mobilization frequently requires fine-grained and observable interactions. Events can provide this” (2019a, 44–45). Also applying quantitative methods, he concluded that elite events (official publicized meetings of LC Serbia committees) set off the mechanics of public gatherings in Vojvodina in 1988, implying that meeting organizers during the summer of 1988 may have been assisted by logistics by the SAWP organization (a transmission communist organization; 2019, 44–45). In another study he focused on the implicit culture (2019b). But he fell short of attributing the AR to the Serbian political elite.

However, although Kosovo was always invoked, we consider it fruitful to limit this paper to Vojvodina, where the conflict was articulate and brought delineated consequences in the form of toppling of the Provincial political leadership in October, 1988. In particular, some aspects need to be illuminated further, relative to the elite–mass interaction.

The Structure of the AR

The AR can be distinguished by three types of activity that mutually complemented each other in producing joint political effects: rallies, “people production” via the media, and the Serb political elite activities. Significantly, the anticommunist and nationalist intelligentsia of Serbia did not insist on a multiparty system being introduced at the time, as was the pattern throughout Europe, but on nationalist goals, including doing away with autonomous provinces and possibly diminishing the autonomy of republics. They found joint terrain with Milošević (Dragović-Soso 2002, 207).

1. Rallies

Rallies have been treated in the literature cited above, but their organization still needs to be clarified. The main question is was it primarily about “ordinary citizens” organizing themselves, as some hold. Was it a true grassroots movement?

Written sources that corroborate this organization are sparse. The Provincial Secretariat of Internal Affairs issued an “Information of Security Aspects of the Rallies” in September, 1988. The 38-page mostly descriptive report ends by a cryptic conclusion: “The center of organizing rallies lies outside Vojvodina” (“*Informacija o bezbednosnim aspektima organizacije mitinga na leto 1988*”,

Pokrajinski sekretarijat za unutrašnje poslove, 1988, 38). Although cryptic, within such a federal system of security more could not have been said.

Andrija Čolak, the press officer of the LCY headquarters at the time, in a diary published under the title *Agony of Yugoslavia*, noted on September 19, 1988, a letter by Party veteran from Serbia Dobrovoje Vidić to the leadership. Vidić protested against a draft proposal by a special committee headed by another Party veteran, Vinko Hafner from Slovenia, for rendering measure of “reprimand” to Milošević for “involvement in organization of rallies” (Čolak, 2017, 207). Čolak takes this as proof of Milošević’s involvement in the organization (also in Mužević 2021, 246).

The committee report reached the floor of the federal CC on October 28, 1988. By that time the Vojvodina leadership was downed and Milošević was triumphant. Members of the federal CC from Vojvodina were replaced by new Milošević appointees. The original report was completely watered down, mentioning no names of persons accountable and not defining the organizing of “mononational” rallies as unacceptable (as had been the position in July). The final report also lamented on the ad hoc committee “not having received precise instructions.” Last, it mentioned that the republican and provincial branches were, in fact, of jurisdiction for reprimands, if at all.¹ *Boris Mužević*, a Slovenian member of the body, commented that “again,” faced with leonine Milošević, the leadership reacted meekly “as sheep” (271).

Raif Dizdarević, formal head of Yugoslav state in August 1988, in his memoirs, mentions being informed at the time by federal security and of having himself listened to a telephone call between Kosovo Serb leader Miroslav Šolević and a member of Serb Party leadership at that time. Under subtitle “Rally revolution goes on,” Dizdarević notes the latter “transmitted messages from Slobodan Milošević as to what to do” (Dizdarević, 1999, 202).

At the inner LCY leadership session on August 31, 1988, *Milošević* lauded rallies as a political form: “I can say without hesitation that now the people is more progressive than the leadership... . But some members of the leadership haven’t grasped it yet. The leadership should follow the people. Working people and citizens deserve recognition for their patience thus far [for having waited to hold rallies in earlier times]... Rallies need to be favorably assessed and this needs to be communicated to the public.” He also protested against rallies being discouraged.² Dizdarević commented that at this session “Milošević indicated quite openly who organizes rallies and why he does so” (203). This Milošević’s speech was quite different than at the end of July, when he did not yet dare go as far, but after the “success” of his operation in August, he let the leadership know of how strong he feels.

This was against official policy, as a few days earlier, on July 19, Yugoslav communist inner leadership appealed to stop rallies. However, at that session, Milošević indirectly indicated he rules rallies and what their purpose was when he told in private *Boris Mužević*, during a break of the session, “that we’ll see whether you (Mužević) will be so skillful in discussion and outsmart me (*zajebati*) again, when rallies come to Slovenia!” At the same session itself Milošević publicly denied having anything to do with them (Mužević, 2021, 238). In a telephone interview with the author, in summer 2022, Mužević stated first not to know of *how* rallies were organized, although he protested against them at the official sessions. After thinking about it, he said that there must have been organizational activity on the part of Milošević, as he was present when Milošević informed the LCY Presidency about the Novi Sad rally a few days ahead. Directly but deviously, Milošević referred to a “delegation of some 5 members or so” coming to Novi Sad (Mužević, 227).

Stipe Šuvar, president of LCY at the time (1988–89) and a distinguished sociologist, a Croat, in his subsequent interviews said, “I became opponent of Milošević when AB began, because it became clear to me ... nationalism was blown into full swing... . It was clear to me that it would lead to downfall of Yugoslavia and of socialism” (2013, 93). “It is clear Milošević suddenly became the sovereign owner of the Serbian nation by way of technology similar to that of contemporary populism” (240). “I became his opponent as soon as he initiated AB.” (329). Although he does not make a synthetic statement, it is evident Šuvar attributes AB directly to Milošević. Šuvar makes no

allusion that power flowed from the people to the leader, that the leader was the product of mass effervescence, or that there was interaction between the mass and the elite on a par basis.

A CIA report on Yugoslavia dated October 31, 1988, pinpoints the issue we are interested in. The report stresses “[Milošević’s] unconventional methods... [He] organized nationalist demonstrations directed against Albanians and other ethnic groups” (Central Intelligence Agency 1988). Like the Hafner committee, only days away, Milošević was considered an “organizer of demonstrations.” The report does not say much, but organizing “nationalist demonstration” by the head of communists of one region against leaders of another region was an absolute novelty, although the organization was covert. People did not know who organized the rallies, because they had the appearance of spontaneity. But the Serbian leadership lauded them.

Let us look at the organization in greater detail: until the Kosovo Serb movement representatives visited Milošević in June 17, 1988, their movement was primarily confined to Kosovo, mainly indoor discussions in Kosovo Polje. At the meeting with Milošević, one of them proposed that a rally be held in Novi Sad. Milošević followed by a rhetorical question as to whether anyone was opposed: everyone remained silent (Kerčov, Radoš, and Raič 1990, 25). Besides that Milošević insisted there be no symbolic emigrations of Serbs from Kosovo. Milošević’s blessing gave the Serb movement a new impetus, support, and guidance.

The first rally was in Novi Sad on July 9. Already there, the head of the Kosovo Serb committee for holding rallies, colonel Mićo Šparavalo left no doubt the rally was not only about Kosovo. Addressing the rally he stated, “Members of the Vojvodina leadership encourage bearers of the separatist Albanian movement of chauvinists... It is no secret that they also intend to disintegrate Serbia further” (1988, 19).

The rally participants, including locals, around one thousand, passed through part of the town, stopping in front of the main administrative building (Banovina), having received water and electricity access, later being severed. They returned the same afternoon by special train where no tickets were needed (Serenceš, in Lekić, Pavić, and Lekić 2009, 43). This is also very unusual and it certainly takes someone with great power to organize. This rally was cold snubbed by Vojvodina leadership.

Upon this first rally, the Belgrade Socialist Alliance organization, a transmission organization, held a meeting two days later, scolding the Novi Sad official behavior. Zoran Todorović, an aspiring young activist stated, “Contrary to Novi Sad, Belgrade is a place where everyone can express his difficulties, where safety is guaranteed to everyone... Hence, [Vojvodina] bureaucracy, all those not trusting the people are in fear” (Mijalković July 12, 1988, 5). Furthermore, positions of Novi Sad leaders do not reflect those of the people, but chairman Dragan Tomić did not miss to repeat, “Serbia needs to be like all other republics” (5).

This was the beginning of some 30 Vojvodina rallies in the summer of 1988, particularly in August. July was filled more with media spectacles, and August was filled by rallies themselves. Fragments of the organization of rallies will now be reconstructed, from written sources and from testimony in interviews.

Around July 20, there was the telephone call by Mile Lavrnić, Milošević’s deputy head of staff to Mićo Šparavalo, official head of the Kosovo Serbs, who was in Belgrade. This was at the time when the federal authorities appealed not to hold “single nation gatherings.” Lavrnić enquired with Šparavalo whether the Kosovo Serbs were coming to the forthcoming Pančevo rally, Šparavalo answered not to having been informed. The go ahead for the rally was given over the official radio by repeatedly announcing that the gathering would be held in Pančevo. Lavrnić seemingly discouraged Šparavalo from bringing Kosovo Serbs, but by keeping the announcement on the radio, locals were encouraged to take part and the rally was legitimized (Kerčov, Radoš, and Raič 1990, 245). Nevertheless, some Kosovo Serbs did come. But it was basically a local Pančevo event and that was the point: to create a movement in Vojvodina.

At the Pančevo event, first, one of the organizers, Ilija Živković, from nearby Vršac, was apprehended for causing agitation. Once at the police station, out of his pocket, he took a pistol

with the engraved text “To Ilija Živković from President of Serbia Petar Gračanin.” He was set free. Second, the existence of firm organizational logistics of the event was transparent from the fact that groups of participants ran into the main square from various directions at the same moment, as reported by the Undersecretary of the Interior, who was present. A third clue relates to an individual distributed by car flyers with ethnically inflammatory content, then illegal. Upon detainment, at the police station, he was set free without being fined by the local Chief of Pančevo Police [Public Security], subordinated to Novi Sad, counter to instructions from the headquarters. The Vojvodina undersecretary present recollected he grasped that the Chief must have received instructions from elsewhere. He also concluded that the entire security system was not in operation. He further commented to have grasped at that moment Milošević controlled all levers of power and that he was the master of the game. What we know about the following events also sheds light on Pančevo, confirming the relevance of these indications.

Some other telephone conversations were also important. Borisav Jović, second in hierarchy in Serbia, immediately after Milošević, was in permanent contact with his in-law (*kum*) Đorđe Ščepančević, director of a Novi Sad metal processing factory, who was instigating workers the entire summer on how to conduct rallies (undersecretary).

Zoran Janačković, head of the League of Communists organization in the Leskovac region, in August, stated, again over the telephone, procuring 12 buses “was the least he could do” for rally organization (Kerčov, Radoš, and Raič, 247).

However, there was no enthusiasm on part of certain individuals. A member of the Vojvodina Communist Presidency was called to a rally in Apatin at the end of August, allegedly a protest of teachers demanding pay raises. He confronted a triad visit there: a member of the Serbian CC, a member of the Serbian State Security, and a member of the Military Security (KOS). They had been staying there for an entire week prior to the rally, holding conferences with employees of enterprises, local farmers, and retirees and instigating that grievances be directed against the Vojvodina leadership (and not for example, against the Federal Government, which froze salaries and retirement benefits at the time). He claimed to have changed the course of conclusions, deleting antiautonomy claims. The youth leader interviewed confronted the triad at approximately the same time in Kikinda, noting that it was headed by Joca Marjanović, a Serbian CC member and included also a Serbian State Security member “unusually versed in general constitutional issues.”

The main *modus operandi* of the Belgrade leadership was that a triad would pose as visiting relatives or taking part in discussions on constitutional changes and would snowball talks. In fact, they were preparing the organization of rallies against the Vojvodina leadership. We could not ascertain the exact number of such group visits, but probably between 10 (president of the Vojvodina Assembly) and 20 (a member of the Vojvodina Party presidency and the Youth leader). In Čurug, which was not resettled after World War II, there was a later influx of Serbs from Bosnia, and the author was told that members of the visiting group claimed those not of Vojvodinian old stock were not represented in the Vojvodina authorities and that newcomers would be expelled from Vojvodina in the conflicts to come. The triads were fear mongering.

The triad structure with the federal military participation gave it more authority; the confrontation was not just about republic vs. province. It also indicates that Milošević was in strategic alliance with the military already in summer, 1988, immediately after Veljko Kadijević assumed the office of federal Minister of Defence. Mamula notes Kadijević and Milošević vacationed together in 1988, immediately upon Kadijević's appointment (Mamula 2014, 168), also directly previous to August rallies.

This depicts the basic frame of the direct organization. The focus of the Belgrade authorities was no longer on bringing Kosovo Serbs to rallies but on stimulating locals to conduct the rallies against the Vojvodina leadership. However, Kosovo remained as a backdrop throughout, as *ultima ratio* why street democracy was unconditionally legitimate and necessary.

Some others took part in technical tasks; for example, posters held at rallies looked simple and amateurish but sincere and convincing. The scenographer of Priština Province Theatre Geroslav

Žarić (Želimir Žilnik) oversaw posters at major rallies. The scenographer also noted that his participation was “mandatory,” as he “worked in a state institution.” A more important example is the work of Belgrade television and media in general. Although Milošević placed his men at the top of the Radio Television Belgrade, the media’s efforts surpassed anything like guided activity. Prominent Belgrade cultural personalities took part at rallies, including poet Matija Bećković, journalist Aleksandar Tijanić and singer Olivera Katarina, who sang patriotic songs during the first rally. Directors of public enterprises would send their workers to rallies, when told so by a triad.

Žilnik reported that as a film director, he was attracted by the July 1988 Novi Sad rally and wanted to make a film of it. The Novi Sad TV director, Andrija Majtenji Marković, would not lend him a crew, “as it had been agreed with Belgrade TV that the latter would cover it.” He also communicated with the Belgrade Television Station Director, who told him he could not lend him a crew “because the gatherings were not about culture.” For later rallies, he obtained a crew from Ljubljana TV, with difficulty, and had to change the entire story the later rallies to fit in. Žilnik was very impressed by how professionally rallies were covered. He found this to be in contrast to the student rallies in 1968. In the book edited by Kerčov, Radoš, and Raič (1990), Zoran Grujić, a member of the Serb committee on organizing gatherings from Kosovo, recollected how they coordinated with the Belgrade TV crew on the spot. The pace of the automobiles and of the cameras was harmonized; shooting thus “produced dramatic scenes”; “the objective was for the maximum amount to be publicized in the media” (255).

This is also related to demonstrators’ rejection of a meeting with Vojvodina functionaries in an indoor setting. The dramaturgy was planned. Dušan Ristić, a former Kosovo functionary, and Miloš Sekulović, a Serbian from Kosov and holding a post in Belgrade, commented on the July Novi Sad rally: “The worst thing that could have happened in Novi Sad is that “they would accord us a warm welcome.” “It would be better if they arrested us.” “Our strategy was for them [the Vojvodina leadership] to make a mistake” (Hudelist, 189). Politically, they made an effective assessment of what would be “a mistake.” A mistake would be creating the impression that the Novi Sad leadership cared about the Kosovo Serb grievances, that they supported the rally participants.

One of the popular Serb Kosovo leaders, Miroslav Šolević, also boasted that their goal was not to establish communication with Novi Sad functionaries (Zoran Pavić, in Lekić, Pavić, and Lekić 2009, 46). In addition, he explained why the rallies were not held in Belgrade, where the population was much larger: “The situation in Belgrade was already not good, both politically and economically. Why should we start a fire in front of a house that sides with us?” (Hudelist, 181). Although he maintained the pretense that the movement was an independent entity, he made it evident that it was cordially associated with the Milošević regime.

Žilnik also noted that participants traveling by bus to the rallies brought changes in clothes, creating the impression that they were multiple people at various rallies on the same day. He also noted that the film equipment that was used by the Belgrade television crew was state of the art, not in use yet at the time.

The script of the rallies was staged to indicate that Kosovo Serbs had been invited. It would not appear as aggressive if a few hundred people came from Kosovo to demonstrate in a Vojvodina town or village a few hundred miles distant, so an “invitation” was staged beforehand. This was so the Vojvodina leadership could not take steps to prevent it, as the initiative came “from the people,” usually a list including some tens of inhabitants would have their names on the invitations (Hudelist 1989, 157). These “invitations” were not authentic. The rallies were often joined by thousands of locals and others (from Serbia and other parts of Vojvodina) who arrived by bus.

In the beginning of August, hard-core participants began to wear folklore garments, to underscore Serbianness. The garments came from shooting a movie by Belgrade Television; in fact, *The Battle of Kosovo* directed by Zdravko Šotra was finished at the time (Lekić, Pavić, and Lekić 2009, 46). Someone took care for garments to reach the participants. They also began to wear *šajkače* traditional Serbian headwear. There were slogans completely not having to do with the situation of

Serbs in Kosovo, such as on the remaking of Tsar Dušan's empire, requests for arms, anti-Albanian slogans, and of course, calls to topple the Vojvodina leadership.

The rallies usually followed a similar pattern: they began with a rendition of the Yugoslav anthem, followed by a local speech about hospitality (someone from a transmission organization who had moved over to the Serbian side), then someone from Kosovo raised the pathetic tones invoking the victimhood and grievances of Kosovo Serbs. Finally, the letter would be read, addressed to the highest federal party leadership, shaming the Vojvodina leadership for their lack of sensitivity to and solidarity with Kosovo Serbs and demanding their removal.

Although the masses did take part and although the Kosovo Serb leaders may have thought of themselves as masters of the events (like Šolević above), in fact, they had been led ever since Milošević consented to the Novi Sad rally. They were provided assistance and instruction by individual functionaries, they were in permanent contact with Milošević's aides, and they received technical support (transportation, meals; Milhalj Ramač: "Za mitingaše je uvek bilo rakije," *Danas*, July 10, 2021, 6). The last included the triads just mentioned, whose authority paved the way to the hearts of many directors who would summon their employees to participate in the rallies (Hudelist 1989; Kerčov, Radoš, and Raič 1990, 252–53; Grdešić 2019a). Grdešić concedes that regime institutions were officially involved in over 52.5% of the rallies (2019a, 61) after September 5. He found direct proof of this. He, however, did not study August, when the most fateful rallies took place.

Our interviews with the Vojvodina functionaries confirmed that the Serb Security Service was actively involved in organizing rallies and instigating locals after the Novi Sad first rally. They would also be present with press passes. The rallies had a dynamic induced by elite events, as studied in part by Grdešić. He did not consider the closed meeting in Milošević's office on June 17, which was the decisive one. Grdešić restricted his analysis to the officially publicized meetings of LC leadership. Had he made use of the July 15 session of the Serbian CC (*Politika*, July 18, 1988, 1, 5), he would have caught the Pančevo meeting in his net.

On October 6, mass and violent demonstrations in Novi Sad exacted resignations of the entire Vojvodina leadership (League of Communists Presidency). In these demonstrations, no Kosovo Serbs were present (Hudelist 1989, 220). The levers of local power had already changed hands. The Vojvodina leaders would not use brute force, which they technically disposed of (Undersecretary). One could ponder where they lost their leonine component, or never had one. They also received no support from the Federal Presidency, which on that very day, sent a fax message demanding speeding up Serbian constitutional change (Marelj, 2020).

2. Media

As early as July, the Belgrade media interpreted Vojvodina leaders as the true enemies of the Kosovo Serbs. This would prepare the ground for the summer of Belgrade media demonizing the Vojvodina leadership. During rallies held that summer in Vojvodina, the leadership of Vojvodina became the main target of the Serbian movement. They were understood as the main culprits of their position in Kosovo, leaving the substance of the Kosovo Serb grievances sidelined. For example, *Politika Ekspres*, a Belgrade daily, reported on July 17, 1988, that "Kosovo Serbs were forced to come [to Novi Sad] not by the [Milošević] unwavering policy, but by the irresolute and opportunistic policy [of the Vojvodina leadership] ("Ko je ustvari doveo Kosovce?" 2).

The height of the reproof was reached after the publication of an internal consultation by the Vojvodina leadership on how to deal with rallies on July 12–13. The manner of speech was frank, and it was not intended for publication. This consultation included criticism of Milošević personally and a call for his removal. The rallies were designated as nationalist. This consultation—with the assistance of Serbian Security—that is, its infiltration into Vojvodina Security—was immediately made known to the Serbian leadership, and accounts were castigated by the Serbian press. The issue of *Politika* reported on "consternation" throughout Serbia regarding protests in factories against the

Vojvodina leadership, which was labeled “racist” and a “faction” (July, 18, 1988, 1, 5, 6), with less pointed designations toward “counterreformists” who were “insensitive to Kosovo Serbs” (alleging other leaderships in Yugoslavia). This meant a public escalation of the conflict with media mobilization of antiautonomist forces.

The campaign dominated the media in the summer of 1988, particularly the *Politika* house, where the chief editors were replaced by loyal Milošević appointees in 1987. Besides news reports geared to AR production goals, letters to the editor (1988–1991) were a special instrument in ideological articulation. For the purpose of AR, a special rubric for letters to the editor (*Odjeci i reagovanja—Echoes and reactions*) was instituted. The rubric lasted from the onset of the attack on Vojvodina leadership until the major demonstrations in Belgrade against Milošević (July 1988–March 1991; Milosavljević 2004). This was a period when popular support for Milošević could be expanded via such an instrument, whereas it would have been unproductive when public opinion began turning against him. It stopped after anti-Milošević demonstrations began in March 1991, but by then the entire power mechanism in Serbia flowed smoothly, as power in the provinces would be—one can say—crushed.

Some of the letters were genuine letters from readers, including some persons of position, whereas others were most likely produced within *Politika*'s editorial offices. For example, one such set of letters was supposed to have come from a “Business Community for Coal Supply of Vojvodina,” an institution that never existed (we checked with the Provincial Archives of Vojvodina, October 2021). According to the narrative in three letters, a lower official in the Community was said to have been harassed by the director for having taken part in the Novi Sad rally in July, whereas a third clerk commented that such behavior was typical of the director and that he was also a drunkard (Mimica and Vučetić 2008, 98–100). The director also “sent a letter” of denial that was unconvincing to read. The pattern was present: a top official acted against popular wishes, harassing his inferiors who supported the Serbian cause. How geared these letters were toward tactical goals was visible from the frequency of the topic coinciding with immediate political objectives. Thus, most letters tackling Vojvodina autonomy were mainly limited to the period from July 1988 to January 1989 (Mimica and Vučetić).

The letters were simple to read, with a consistent pattern of content: those on Vojvodina uniformly stated that people did not care about Vojvodina autonomy, that the autonomy needed to be done away with, and that personalities advancing such ideas (Mihaly Kertesz most prominently) should be rewarded because they “helped in downing the red bourgeoisie” (Mimica and Vučetić 2008, 85). Even stronger was the idea that Serbia should be “united” and without provinces (or without provinces enjoying any significant power). The underlying message was, particularly in *Reactions and Echoes*, that the “people” were an active agent that “says,” “understands,” “suffers,” and “demands,” acquiring full personhood (Grdešić 2019a, 76–80).

3. The Serbian Elite

Some prominent Belgrade intellectuals at the time were active in the production and media coverage of the rallies, as noted. However, as in every essentially authoritarian system the Security Service—in this case the Serbian one—played a critical role, pointed out, for example, by Lebor (2002, 107) as well as Glaurdić (2011), Ramet (2004) and Bennett (1995). Vojvodina leader communist Boško Krunic also noted rally speakers “were instructed by the Serb UDBA”, but did not elaborate (2009, 17).

In the analyses of the Yugoslav dissolution, the political police (UDBA) did not receive special attention. The UDBA was decentralized to republics, provinces (and the military) following the 1966 removal of Aleksandar Ranković; federal coordination was weak although Stane Dolanc attempted to recentralize it (early 1980s, mainly on tasks against liberalization, but also against terrorism; Vasović-Mekina 1999).

Žilnik also spoke of this, including of the “commander” of the Novi Sad rally, Mićo Šparavalo, a police colonel. One of the Presidency members interviewed added that a then in-service general of the JNA was active in Bačka Palanka ahead of October 5 when they marched on Novi Sad. In Bačka Palanka, an aspiring security officer, Jovica Stanišić, who would soon head the Serbian Security Service and be instrumental in establishing paramilitary forces, persuaded/exacted two local officials immediately preceding October 4, 1988, to change their position from supporting the Vojvodina leadership to heading the march against them (Radovan Pankov and Mihaly Kertesz). They received major promotions in the aftermath. It is known that in his operations against the Vojvodina leadership, Stanišić made use of the freelance newspaper woman by the name of Ranka Čičak, known to have written against the Vojvodina leadership and to have carried out covert work (Lopušina 1997, 373).

Serbian Security had already diligently monitored Vojvodina leaders in the second half of the 1980s (Dragović-Savić 2020). In fact, Serbian security penetrated and subdued the personnel at the top of Vojvodina Security, subverting the efficiency of the latter’s activities relating to rallies (undersecretary). The subsequent fate of the members of the Vojvodina leadership indicates, however, that even they may not have been fully homogenous in their readiness to defend Vojvodina autonomy at any price.

In 1989, Vojo Vučinić, a Kosovo Serb leader, accused another rally leader Miroslav Šolević, of being “financed by the [Serbian] Security Service” (Kerčov, Radoš, and Raič 1990, 253).

Grdešić’s skeptical attitude toward the role of UDBA may be due to its formal competences and its division into republic and provincial branches. Security services are covert by nature. Informally, however, UDBA remained a significant influence. Also, the public did not necessarily know the changes that had come about in diminishing its formal role. That is why one could expect directors of enterprises to follow what they were told by UDBA personnel, for example, by directing employees to rallies, as happened in Bačka Palanka and surroundings on October 4, when they collectively marched on Novi Sad.

In Vojvodina, UDBA was under the control of the Vojvodina leadership since 1972. But the less than perfect unity of the Vojvodina leadership and certain links and informal friendships from the period previous to 1972 enabled the Vojvodina State Security to malfunction. At rallies, initially in Nova Pazova on August 3, the Vojvodina Police Service noticed the presence of Serbian State Security members among demonstrators. One was a journalist with an official pass. He communicated with rally participants.

The Undersecretary of Interior was falsely accused of sending firefighters against the demonstrators on October 6 in Novi Sad. To clear his name, he visited the Federal Minister of the Interior Dobrosav Ćulafić, a Montenegrin in Belgrade. The Minister commented that the undersecretary’s move was now beside the point, “since all power now lies across the street”—that is, in the Republic Ministry. The Undersecretary further related that Vojvodina Security set up a task force in June to monitor the rallies. Among its members was the head of the Vojvodina State Security Milutin Mikalački, who never attended these meetings. His junior staff members were, however, always present at them and took notes. The undersecretary later established what he suspected—that they were informing Serbian State Security. He commented that the Vojvodina State Security Service had already been dismantled. He also commented that his early assessment that the Vojvodina government would be removed was based on the situation in his own service and on reading *Politika*.

All this adds up to major involvement by the Serbian Security forces. But there also was a special political task force in Belgrade, and Pavić offered the name of its head (Pavić, in Lekić, Pavić, and Lekić 1990, 37). The force was the central body coordinating all activities in Vojvodina. Whereas Pavić hypothesized the task force was headed by a relatively junior Party activist in Belgrade, the then Youth functionary interviewed attested the task force was composed of all “executive secretaries,” junior functionaries in the Serbian CC. She related to have been informed on its existence by Ratimir Vico, one of Milošević’s lieutenants. She also stated that among the younger

functionaries, where relations were less formal, at the time, the task force's existence was no secret. As has been noted, other segments of the nationalist cultural elite also participated, and their collaboration was also important.

Demand Factors?

Prior to the 1988 rallies, major unrest or commotion significance was not noted in Vojvodina, in contrast to the other parts of Yugoslavia. Of course, the uncertainty of public life, the weight of years of economic stagnation, and deterioration in the standard of living were terrains where many demagogic ideas and ethnic entrepreneurship could effloresce. However, communist politicians could not avail themselves of such speech. Their dictionary was not to have been about "the people," particularly ethnically understood people, but about "the working class." It was on September 5, 1988, Milošević, inspired by their success in Vojvodina, stated, "They are persecuted as Serbs or Montenegrins... They cannot defend themselves, emigrate or gather as Dutchmen, Protestants or cotton pickers, because nobody is threatening them on such grounds" (Mijalković September 7, 1988, 7). In this way nationalism was introduced by a communist into political parlance. Nationalism, "the nationalist proclivity" from other sources was already well present, but communist leaders were always to suppress it, (Connor 1984). By then he had been using nationalist speech for more than a year, after he invoked the "ancestral curse" should radical measures not be undertaken in Kosovo.

However, was there any autonomous demand for AR? Such demand is often characterized by a certain socially constructed naiveté (Grdešić 2019a, 120). All Grdešić's Novi Sad interviewees, rally participants, recollected rallies almost 30 years later with an adverse stand toward them. One stated, "Everything was organized, ready, posters were distributed to people ..." (2019a, 120). Another participant recollected, "many workers were pressured [by the management] to go ... who did not want to go; there were firings and all kinds of things!" (121).

But immediate supporters did exist, and they were to be found among the nationally pronounced subjects and among those who perceived the Vojvodina regime as undemocratic [within the meaning of the time] (see, Kerčov, Radoš, and Raič 1990). The latter may have been few, whereas the former may have been the main rallies' support group. A way to identify such demand is to establish the level of national attachment and feeling. As indicated by the JUIO 1985–86 youth study (Vrcan and Ule, 1985), there were clear signs of Serbian youth being less nationalistically oriented in Vojvodina than in Serbia proper. If less dispersed, ethnonationalism was not absent in Vojvodina.

In other research, indicators of authoritarianism and latent antidemocratic disposition have been studied (1987 and 1989). Its presence in all regions of Yugoslavia rose to majority status in 1989, but Vojvodina indicated a substantially lower presence than Serbia proper (Flere and Molnar 1992). However, psychological authoritarianism was prevalent in all Yugoslav environments, and whether and how it would be activated depended on political agents. The fact that authoritarianism was dominant throughout Yugoslavia but did not produce political movements based on authoritarianism, for example, where it was highest, in Macedonia, lends further support to the opinion that events cannot be explained primarily by social structure but by political agents and processes.

In sum, a strong argument can be made that a special effort on the part of the political players, ethnic entrepreneurs among Belgrade politicians, was needed to push Vojvodina youth (and adults) into nationalist rallies and nationalist fervors. To oust Vojvodina leadership, propaganda, unrest, and rallies were needed. The unity of Yugoslavia was now translated into the unity of Serbia, although at the initial rallies unity of Yugoslavia was paid lip service, along with that of Serbia, which was now highlighted (Kerčov, Radoš, and Raič 1990, 205, 231), and later forgotten, absolutizing Serbia. Settlers were the vanguards of the movement. Kerčov, Radoš, and Raič, even hold this was so because of their "subjugated position" (61).

Discussion and Conclusion

Our findings on the operation of rallies, the media, and the political police clearly point to an ever greater confluence in action, breaking down the factors that hindered unity of their influence. The sources on which we relied supported each other in such a conclusion. One could suspect our Vojvodinian interviewees were biased, as most of them were at the uppermost level of power in Vojvodina in the summer of 1988 and were ousted soon after. But their statements fit almost like a glove with statements quoted by Dizdarević, Šušar, Mužević, Krunic, Čolak, the CIA, Pavić, and Milošević himself. Other facts noted also fit with the Serbian political elite directing the show and the Vojvodina elite losing power prior to October 5–6, so that Novi Sad workers and students could have been forced to take part in the October 6 demonstrations. In this sense, it was clearly a top-down affair. Grdešić's focus-group responses also strongly prevail in this direction.

Thus, the issue of the thrust of rallies and of the entire movement in Vojvodina that summer returns to the basics of elite theory (Lopez, 2013). The rallies' particularity was not that one elite segment was fighting another, which is, of course, common. What was more particular was that one geographic/ethnic political elite segment organized the overthrow of another such segment, under a late communist and of a consociational political system. We cannot deny that the masses took part, but they were hardly independent actors.

Vladislavljević's positions add little to the explanation: "The protest groups' interaction with high officials reveal[s] that it was the agency of the protest groups, including industrial workers, Kosovo Serbs and their non-elite allies outside the province, that principally lay behind the summer protest campaign" (2008, 143). Politicians, authors, and the interviewees point in the opposite direction.

Returning to the question posed in the title, there certainly were people in Vojvodina wishing for another government, but the toppling itself was not their doing. They might have participated at the rallies, but the role of the Belgrade political leadership in their organization—needless to say in the media campaign—was critical. This article sheds light on how the elite operated.

The absence of meddling in the internal affairs of other units of the federation was a tacit presupposition at the time when Yugoslavia was conceived as a community of eight constituents, including the two provinces. Rato Dugonjić, a Bosnian Serb, noted so as early as 1962 (Petranović and Zečević 1988, 80–81). The leaderships in the two Serbian provinces perceived themselves as independent of the Serbian republic—that is, of its leadership. Thus, the Vojvodinian leadership undertook little protective action against moves by the Belgrade Serbian authorities, like the sending of triads, which were illegitimate by the then existing standards. The Vojvodina authorities were caught off guard, particularly as most top officials were vacationing in August (as noted by one Presidency member).

There must have been two segments of the Vojvodina populace that were willing to participate and who must have disliked what was typical of the Vojvodina leadership within Yugoslavia: first, those with a special care for interethnic harmony, asserting ethnic minorities, and second, a repressive position, which considered subverting interethnic harmony—for example, prohibition of the drama "Pigeon Pit" ("Golubnjača") by Jovan Radulović for presentation in 1982 for instigating ethnic intolerance ("Kraška jama usred Novog Sada" *Vreme*, October 11, 2012). This was at a time that such prohibitions in the area of art were not practiced elsewhere in Yugoslavia.

This boils down to those with strong Serb national feelings who were the nucleus of the Vojvodinian rally participants, whereas a few liberals may also individually have been attracted by the new, direct speech. Thus, one could speak of the Pančevo rally composed only of a hard (mainly nationalist) core, whereas, the October 5 violent demonstrations in Novi Sad were directly instigated, in fact forced upon a mass of workers and students in Novi Sad, Bačka Palanka, and surrounding areas, as Grdešić describes. Even secondary school students were forcibly mobilized (Grdešić, 2019a, 122).

At first glance, the conflict described was one between two segments of the Serbian political elite: the Belgrade elite and the Novi Sad elite (the latter included a few members of other Vojvodina

ethnic groups, although Serbs always formed the majority). However, the elite from Novi Sad understood itself as the guardian of ethnic parity, tranquility, and mutual understanding in multiethnic Vojvodina, whereas the Belgrade elite were Serbian only, with Serbian unity as the only objective—a goal for the attainment of which there were practically no restrictions on the means applied. Grdešić does not overstate in calling it a “Machiavellian elite” (2019b, 625). Therefore, although both factions—the Vojvodinian and the Belgrade—were nominally communist, there were important political differences in the understanding of their mission, differences that were “active.” This cannot be considered a mere power struggle among Serbs. After the dismissal of the Vojvodina leadership in October, 1988, the Vojvodina people were positioned to enter Serbian columns in the forthcoming wars. Serbs mostly replaced Serbs in the Vojvodina elite in the aftermath of October 6, and this change was strategic. Similar events followed in Kosovo and Montenegro. The situation contained features well explained by populism, where political leaders, by instigating rallies and media action, not only mobilized the populace, but also undermined official institutions. Thus, one could draw parallels to the Washington, DC events of January 6, 2021, which is beyond the scope of this paper.

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Notes

- 1 Archives of Republic of Slovenia, IV, 1589, 1311, Izveštaj radne grupe o utvrđenim činjenicama i predlozima za eventualne mere.” XVII. sednica Centralnog komiteta SKJ.
- 2 Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, AS1589/IV, box 1355, 36/3.

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