

As the World Turned Upside Down: Left Intellectuals in Yugoslavia

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For decades, we had staked out various positions on “actually existing socialism”, a debate where sometimes static arguments on both right and left were ritually re-enacted. Now the process was going off the rails in an unknown direction. A tired tale was transmuting into a thriller.

At first, for the left, it was all good. From 1985, we focused anew on the news from the USSR. We felt our hopes raised by the prospects of glasnost and perestroika. Mikhail Gorbachev spoke of socialism as we wanted it to be and with all the weight of the great CPSU. Socialism with a human face. Socialism with an honest voice. Socialism with an outstretched hand. Socialism with economic efficiency. When Gennady Gerasimov, witty and articulate foreign affairs spokesman, was asked in 1987 what was the difference between the Prague spring and Soviet glasnost-perestroika, he replied “19 years”. We grasped here at every detail of the news from there.

It wasn't only in the Soviet Union that the winds of change were blowing. Throughout Eastern Europe, there was a groundswell of rising expectations, both in response to developments in the Soviet Union and an unleashing of pent-up questions, hopes and fears brewing for decades. Here I had a close-up engagement with the forces in motion in GDR, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, where I spoke to a wide range of people, from professors and apparatchiks to waiters, factory workers, students and farmers. For all of them, there was a growing sense of being on the brink of something that would change their lives. There was much media attention to what was happening. I wanted to ask the questions that no media reports were answering for me. I wanted to contest the dominant discourse that was drowning out voices and ideas I wanted to be heard. I wanted to know how those living in this cataclysm were coming to terms with it. I spent as much time as I could in Eastern Europe, financing most of my trips by writing about them for various publications.

My most intense interactions were at conferences. When we gathered in Cavtat in 1988, we had no idea that these were the last days of Yugoslavia. Or of Czechoslovakia, the GDR and the mighty USSR. We knew that the winds of change were blowing and that the ground was shifting under our feet. I had received an invitation from the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, the ruling party, and the journal *Socialism in the World*, to come to an international round table on the theme of “Socialism and the Spirit of the Age”. The conference was full of luminaries of the international left intelligentsia, such as Luciana Castellina, Constanzo Preve, Samir Amin, Paul Sweezy, Harry Magdoff, Daniel Singer, Enrique Dussell, Göran Therborn, Georges Labica, Ralph Miliband, Ellen Meiksins Wood and others. Many of the leading intellectuals from Yugoslavia and other socialist countries, whose names were not so well known abroad, were there too. I was honoured to be among them. The proceedings were televised and reported in newspapers and other periodicals.

The atmosphere was glasnost itself. There was such existential edge to the discussions. It was our task to feel the pulse of the times, not as detached academics, but as participating intellectuals. The format assumed that all papers written for the conference were already read. Mine was discussed at the first session. I was arguing that Marxism was still the most coherent, credible and comprehensive mode of thought, capable of coming to terms with the complexity

of contemporary experience. The counter-trends were unravelling it at the core, taking something full-blooded, integral and rich with unrealised possibilities and substituting something insipid, fragmented and decadent. The crisis in Marxism, I contended, was due to the de-totalising pressures of advanced capitalism as well as the fossilised totalities of certain experiments in socialism.

At the evening plenary, the current president in the collectivist post-Tito leadership, Stipe Šušvar, addressed the conference. He opened his speech quoting me and proceeded to quote others there in a very intelligent and up-to-the-minute analysis of the prospects for the renewal of socialism. He was playing an important role in struggling for a reformed democratic socialism in a unitary Yugoslavia, combating nationalist tendencies pulling in a separatist direction, not only in the nation, but even within the party. Throughout the conference, although speakers addressed major philosophical and political debates on a global scale, there was a sharp focus on Eastern Europe, especially as we were there, articulating a sense that things could not continue as they were and an anxiety about what would happen next. There was a sense that the ground was trembling underneath these experiments in socialism.

There were many points of view at play and many issues at stake, but a basic point of tension was whether the core concepts of Marxism offered a clear vision for the future or whether other positions, such as liberal humanism, social democracy or postmodernism (or some modification of Marxism in these directions), were the way to go. There was a pulling away from class analysis and class struggle in the name of universal human values and an impetus to de-ideologisation of culture, politics and economics. It was a retreat from socialism. This trend was coming primarily from the higher party intelligentsia in Eastern Europe. Those arguing back were also from this party intelligentsia, but also and most forcefully from outside these countries. "Western leftists are all theory and no practice", declared Jiang Chunze, a Chinese economist. I wondered how many of them would have found their way to Marxism or joined communist parties, if they were not in power. Now power was shifting and it was becoming clear. They said that we idealised socialism and we said that they idealised capitalism.

On the afternoon of the fifth day, there was a final plenary and in the evening a party. Unfortunately, I was whisked away, because I had been invited to speak at two further conferences while I was in Yugoslavia. In Sarajevo, there was a conference on nationalities and nationalism. We, all different nationalities, walked around Sarajevo when we arrived and stood on the street where the famous assassination took place and took in the sights and sounds of what seemed to be a cosmopolitan city of diverse nationalities living together to common purpose under socialism. The exchanges here were not so polemically charged as in Cavtat. Most speakers agreed broadly on critically preserving traditional cultures while combating separatist nationalism. It was impossible to imagine on this day the separatist and nationalist forces that would so tragically engulf this city in the days ahead.

While this conference continued, I was again whisked away, this time to Kumrovec, the birthplace of Tito and site of the higher party school. It was a splendid purpose-built modernist building with offices, classrooms, restaurant, library, residences. We also visited a humble house where Tito was born and raised. Next to it, was a big bronze statue of Tito in his uniform, boots and great coat, pondering the future. At the party school, I had interesting, if disturbing, encounters with the younger generation of the party intelligentsia, as well as more time to speak with colleagues who came from Cavtat. Jiang Chunze from China was only interested in prices and availability of consumer goods. She replied to every macro political question with a micro economic answer. She responded to a paper on alienation by Pirrko Turpeinen, a psychiatrist from Finland, wondering how anyone could possibly be alienated when they had a standard of living that was the envy of the rest of the world.

The conference was on Marxism and culture. My talk was a polemic against postmodernism and against the retreat from ideological analysis of culture. It did not go down well with the younger party intelligentsia, who were the majority of the audience for these lectures. They had a “down with the old and in with the new” attitude. Marxism was old and postmodernism was new. Gerald Raulet, a French philosopher, who, I contended, gave too much ground to postmodernism, was much more popular with them. Between the lot of us, the guest lecturers, the staff and students, we had some very robust exchanges. In the evening, there was a ceremony in the library and presentations to the speakers. Finally, I got to stay for the end of a conference and the party. We talked and drank and sang the *Marseillaise*, *Avanti Populo*, *Solidarity Forever* and *Red Flag*, all with great fervour.

The next day I headed for Zagreb, where I spent time with Srdan Lelas, whom I saw on all of my trips to Yugoslavia. We walked and talked for hours before he drove me to the airport. We discussed the various debates at Cavtat and his own analysis of the problems of Yugoslavia. He had a very clear mind and had a list of reforms that were necessary: new forms of social ownership, separation of party and state, etc.

Back in Dublin, I kept in touch with many people I had met on this trip. I received regular phone calls from Harare from Herbert Ushewokunze, a government minister in Zimbabwe, who wanted to talk more about Eastern Europe, where events were moving rapidly and dramatically and generating a sense that there would be implications for Africa. There was to be a meeting of the council of ministers in Zimbabwe to discuss this and he asked me if I would write notes for him for the occasion, which I did, even if much of it was what he didn't want to hear. Basically, I argued that socialism could only be built on understanding and consent and that was slipping away. At the same time, I didn't want socialist regimes to give up power. Instead I hoped they might yet build understanding and consent, but I feared that time had run out and it would no longer be possible. In late 1989, he was disturbed when a ZANU party congress when commitment to socialism was questioned by those who asked why they should hold on to it when those who begat it were abandoning it. I was thinking a lot about the implications of what was happening in Eastern Europe for the rest of the world. The whole balance of power in the world seemed to be shifting and that would have more drastic consequences than anyone was yet saying. I was afraid of what it might mean for Africa. Our sunny story now seemed to be turning into a darker tale.

In the summer of 1989, walking around Montenegro, along with all the images of Mickey and Minnie Mouse and logos of Coca Cola, there were now pictures of Slobodan Milošević everywhere. Not an image of Tito anywhere. When I visited Miodrag Vlahavić, a former president of Montenegro, in Tivat, I remarked upon it. While Miodrag was tentative, his wife Vera was enthusiastic about Milošević, saying that was it possible to be proud to be a Serb again. At this time, there was a struggle for power in the party between Stipe Šuvar and Slobodan Milošević, symbolising the forces at play. Although Milošević contended that a strong Serbia meant a strong Yugoslavia, it was clear even then that it not so. Another worrying indicator was rampant inflation. I changed \$50 when I arrived and became a millionaire for the first time in my life. I spoke to many people and found much uncertainty about what was to come.

Meanwhile, Hungary had begun dismantling its border with Austria and GDR citizens on holiday crossed over. In August 1989, 900 rushed the border in one day. In October, the GDR celebrated its 40th anniversary and its citizens showed unrestrained enthusiasm for the visiting Gorbachev, who warned that 'life punishes those who come too late'. Watching on television, I was shocked to see Frank Loeser, whom I knew, commenting on these events as a defector. In Hungary, there was a party congress, where the party changed its name, disbanded its workplace branches,

announced the separation of party and state, the end of the one-party-state and the imminence of multi-party elections.

In the midst of all this, I was back in Yugoslavia that autumn and mixing with a multiplicity of players in this monumental drama. The atmosphere in Cavtat in October 1989 was even more urgent than the year before with a sense of speeded-up history sweeping this world away even as we were standing upon it. The format was more stream-lined and the debate was even sharper. The theme was socialism and democracy. Instead of many papers, there was a single platform, drafted by Miloš Nikolić, to be debated. The key sentences were: "There is no socialism without democracy. There is no democracy without socialism." It was a seductive formulation, and my first reaction was to affirm it, but on further thought, there were many complications. There had been genuine, if inadequate, democratic gains under capitalism, such as multi-party elections, trade unions, public debate, especially under pressure of progressive movements. These were not to be taken lightly, even if full democracy could only be achieved under socialism. Conversely, there had been real strides in the direction of socialism, such as expropriation of the expropriators, national planning, more equal distribution of wealth, in societies that were undemocratic in many respects.

Most participants recognised that the one-party-state was on the ropes. It had few defenders, even from those who were there from the parties of one-party-states. The imperative was to find a democratic socialist path into the future. The rough consensus was for separation of party and state, autonomous trade unions and civil society, freedom to travel, freedom of expression, multi-party elections, even if it meant communist parties ceding power. Indeed, this had just happened in Poland with the communists ceding power to Solidarity and it was clear that it was about to happen in Hungary. However, Milan Matouš of Czechoslovakia wanted, not only to defend the one-party-state, but to restore the old discursive boundaries where no party could criticise another. Let each participant speak of the problems of his own country, he suggested. No, the time for that was over. The gloves were off. Others felt they could say whatever they wanted about Czechoslovakia or anywhere else and they did. These were common problems, caught up in the same sweep of history, overtaking us all. One tactic of hardliners was to respond to questions about lack of free expression with a barrage of facts and figures about industry, agriculture and employment. All roads of retreat were blocked. In a confrontation of Anton Bebler from Slovenia with Milan Matouš from Czechoslovakia and Hans Luft from the GDR, Bebler said to them: "I tell you that your countries are like concentration camps and you tell me that you have full employment. There is full employment in a concentration camp, but it is not socialism and it is not democracy." In a debate as to whether participation in next year's conference should be opened up to alternative movements in Eastern Europe, Marek Kuczynski opposed inviting Solidarity and Milan Matouš did not take too kindly to the suggestion from Monty Johnstone that Alexander Dubček be asked to participate.

When I turned on the television news one night during the conference, I learned that the long-time editor of *Pravda*, Viktor Afanasyev, was being replaced by Ivan Frolov, of Gorbachev's inner circle. This great champion of glasnost was he who had enforced the opposite of glasnost upon me a decade earlier at *World Marxist Review*. The foreign correspondents at the press conference all seemed impressed, but I was sceptical. There was no getting away from glasnost at our conference though. Most were trying to face up to the challenges of the inevitable. Marek Kuczynski of Poland was struggling to come to terms with the defeat of his party, but defending their acceptance of the democratic process and their continuing role in preventing a return to capitalism in Poland. He found himself in something of a dilemma: as a Pole he wanted the new government to succeed in solving Poland's economic problems, but as a communist he wanted

his own party to come back to power as the guarantor of the socialist character of the social order.

While in Cavtat, the international television news announced “Hungary buried 40 years of communism today” on the day that Hungary declared itself to be republic, not a people’s republic. Gyorgy Szoboszlai put up a strong defence of the position taken by the Hungarian Socialist Party. Hungary’s earlier attempts to introduce economic reform had failed, he argued, because its political structures were too rigid. There needed to be a reduction of the role of the party in the state and a reduction of the role of the state in the economy and in the society. It would be a difficult time, because communists had 40 years to transform society and people wanted an alternative. There were now more than 30 parties and he speculated that Democratic Forum would win the coming election. Still he believed there was strong support for socialist values in the society, although he admitted that there was the possibility of a transition to capitalism in a capitalist world order.

Others too, including Miloš Nikolić, took a positive approach, despite their anxieties. He contended that a multi-party system was not only inevitable, but might bring better results for socialism. There was a lot of anxiety though. I found a number of Yugoslav communists of the generation who fought in the partisans and built socialism in Yugoslavia, quite depressed, asking if it was all falling apart. They were wondering if they had failed in the cause to which they had given their whole lives, yet they were still struggling not to fail. Oleg Teofanov of the USSR spoke of the alienation of the masses of working people from power and property and saw perestroika as a revolutionary redistribution of power and property transferred from the party back to the people. The traditional bolshevik slogan “All power to the soviets” was being revived to characterise this process. Going beyond this, I knew that there were Soviet intellectuals, still members of the CPSU, asking if the October revolution was a mistake.

Most of the worries and warnings expressed about all this came, not so much from hard-line communists in the east, but from critical socialists in the west. Luciana Castellina raised questions about Eastern Europe looking to political pluralism and parliamentary practices to solve their problems, when these were declining in power and becoming more and more of an empty shell. “Abstract rights of citizens cover over class dominance”, she contended. An active participant in the debates myself, I too expressed concern over a failure to focus on where real power was in the world, over a preoccupation with the obstacles to democracy in socialist states to the point of obscuring the most formidable obstacle to true democracy in the world, which was the international capitalist system. All the emphasis was on freeing the economy and civil society from the state and on freeing the state from the party, which was fair enough, but it was obfuscating the need to free the economy, civil society and party from the hegemony of global capitalism, especially at a time when forces in socialist societies were running headlong toward it. Teofanov, reflecting the current popularity of convergence theory in the east, asked if the distinction between capitalism and socialism was obsolete. I conceded that most existing societies were hybrid forms, but argued that it was still crucial to name the systemic alternatives and that I feared that the backing away from this could be a cover for those who wanted to see a peaceful transition from socialism to capitalism without wanting to say so. Darko Strajn of Slovenia, speaking of the need to free civil society from ‘so-called socialist states’, said he wanted to discard the very term socialism, however much western leftists liked it. Ernesto Laclau reacted negatively to all talk of systems and classes and parties, preferring a postmodernist plurality of subjectivities to ‘old platitudes about class’. The issue of whether what was happening would go in the direction of a return to capitalism was taken head on. Harry Magdoff, editor of *Monthly Review*, went so far as to speak of a counter-revolution on the part of eastern intellectuals, who wanted to live like their counterparts in the west. Hosea

Jaffe, in long exile from South Africa, remarked that the crisis of capitalism was being brought into socialism.

It was clear to most of us that socialism could only survive through radical democratisation. It had to play itself out, whatever the risks. Socialism had to be based on consent and this had been short-circuited in the one-party- state. We thought what would come out of it would be something much better or much worse than anything we had yet seen. Our discussions were world historically serious, whether speaking formally in the conference hall or conversing informally while having meals, walking along the harbour, swimming in the sea, sunbathing on the naturist beach or drinking slivovic late at night. That is not to say that there weren't moments of light relief. Hans Luft from the GDR seemed to think that pacifying the youth with greater freedom to travel and pornography might solve the problem. It could even be good, because 'we too like to look at naked girls'. At the farewell party, the post-Marxist Ernesto Laclau surprised me by singing with great gusto many of the old Marxist songs. We all took leave of each other, full of plans for future conferences, not knowing how quickly and how drastically it would all come unravelled and make this conference the last.

I flew west to Dublin, but my mind stayed in the east. The dizzying pace of events accelerated. On 7 November, the government of the GDR resigned. On 8 November, the politburo of the SED resigned. On 9 November, the Berlin wall came down. Then, still in November, the action turned to Prague. Masses were on the streets. Dubček returned to Prague. Some felt that the promise of the Prague spring might come to fruition in this autumn, but others had other ideas. It all seemed up for grabs. From one city to another, one country to another, this wave spread and surged. People were on the street, united in demanding change, but divided as to what change they wanted. Some wanted a renewal of socialism, while others wanted a return to capitalism, while still others wanted a restoration of monarchy. By the end of 1989, GDR was governed by a round table headed by Hans Modrow, Vaclav Havel was president of Czechoslovakia and Nicolae and Elena Ceauşescu were executed in Romania. We saw most of it live on the new 24-hour news channels.

All through 1989, I felt the tremors of this groundswell and struggled to conceptualise its meaning in world historical terms. *Has the red flag fallen?* I asked in my tract published by Attic Press.¹ Soon the red flags were not only falling, but being ripped down and burnt in the streets. Such a fierce backlash, such a ferocious wave of anti-socialist reaction. I was not so shocked as some on the left, but I was surprised at the escalating vehemence of it and the ever more reactionary character of much of it. I had overestimated both the passivity and progressiveness of these populations. My sympathies were with the protestors, at least with some of them, but there was still a wrenching in me as each government fell. I did not grieve for Honecker or Zhivkov or Jakes or Ceaucescu or the lesser known cynics or careerists who kept them in place, but I did grieve for the honest communists who lived and died for this movement.

Events in the GDR hit me hardest. I was not impressed by those who joined the exodus, especially doctors leaving behind them the sick and bringing the health service into crisis, but I was impressed by those who stayed and demonstrated. I felt strong sympathies simultaneously both for the SED-PDS and for New Forum, but soon the voices of both Hans Modrow and Jens Reich were drowned out by other voices. Both the forces of reform communism and forum politics had come to ascendancy too late to prevail. They were being overtaken by other forces, darker forces. In other countries too, such as Hungary, those who initiated the process, such as Imre Pozsgay, had been already been discarded by it. I began to see that the same would come to pass for Gorbachev, as well as for his opponents. Those who took to the streets were not the same as those who were taking power.

All through the events of 1989, I clung to the belief that the promises of perestroika could be fulfilled. By 1990, I could see that that what we were witnessing was the restoration of capitalism and not the renewal of socialism. I did not think that this was the death of socialism, despite the headlines screaming at me that it was, but I did accept that it was a massive defeat. This was a most dramatic upheaval, not only politically, but psychologically. My whole sense of history was built around the idea of a transition from capitalism to socialism. Yet I saw the opposite happening before my eyes. Many on the left were finding it disturbing and disorienting. I was preoccupied with thinking it through and refusing the easy answers, whether from right or left.

In the spring of 1990, I set off for Berlin, Budapest and Prague. ² Elections were underway. Parties were proliferating. Many visions of the future were competing and colliding. The atmosphere was edgy with a sense of a new order. For the left, everything was opening up just as it was closing down again. After the euphoria would come the exploitation and eventually the discovery that freedom was not so simple nor so accessible as it seemed. They would have to get the hamburgers, jeans, beauty contests and faith healers out of their system. Of course, t Eastern Europe was better for what dramatic democracy it was experiencing. Who could resist the righteousness of the reversals of prisoners becoming prime ministers and presidents, of prime ministers and presidents becoming prisoners? Who could not welcome the opening of the Berlin wall, the election of factory managers and parliamentary representatives, the reassertion of suppressed thought in the universities, the reappearance of books of banned authors in the bookshops and libraries, television worth watching, radio worth hearing, newspapers worth reading? Who could say Eastern Europe was not better for glasnost and multi-party elections? Who could believe the world was not better for disarmament and the end of the cold war?

However, I asked, was it progress to see Leningrad become St. Petersburg again, to see Modrow replaced by de Maziere, to see Walesa, a trade union leader, selling his country's workforce as cheap labour for foreign exploitation, to see enterprises held in social ownership being privatised, to see a world of relative equality transformed into one of five star restaurants for some and soup kitchens for others, to see educated and employed women going back to the home, to see people given a secular and socialist education longing for miracles and monarchs, to see people who lived together in peace at each other's throats? Until now these countries had formed an alternative base of power in the world, which set limits on the hegemony of international capitalism and on what US foreign policy could do in the world. What they couldn't get with their guns and bombs and nuclear warheads, they could now walk right in now and buy at cut price and be begged to do it and indeed be praised for doing so.

In July 1990, I was back in Yugoslavia, combining a holiday with my working on a series of articles for the *Irish Times*. The small town of Budva had never experienced such a large influx as the summer of 1990. Its beaches and narrow streets were teeming and its telephone lines and water supply were strained beyond capacity by a population swelled to many times its normal size. The reason was not just that it was a charming coastal town along the glorious Montenegrin riviera, but that Yugoslav holiday patterns had undergone a significant shift as a result of the heightening of ethnic tensions in the past year. Previously much of the population of Belgrade migrated to Dubrovnik in the summer months, but Serbs who dared not venture into Croatia with BG licence plates were swarming into Montenegro. In the aftermath of the victory of Croatian nationalists in spring elections in Croatia, stories were circulating of Serbs (as well as Croatian communists) being purged from government, media and educational positions, of a huge rally proclaiming the autonomy of Serbs within Croatia, of incipient paramilitary formations among both Serbs and Croats. There was a revival of Ustasha tendencies among Croats and the Chetnik movement among Serbs, right-wing nationalist trends thought long dead. A commemoration of Mihajlović, leader of the latter, was held in Belgrade for the first time in

40 years. On the eve of the world cup, Croatian football fans turned their back on the Yugoslav flag, booed during the national anthem and cheered Holland against Yugoslavia in a friendly match in Zagreb. TV Zagreb then refused to cover the matches of the Yugoslav team as they progressed to the quarter finals.

"It is like 1941 again", a Macedonian street trader said to me, "it is not just nationalities splitting apart, but in the same family, one brother is a fascist and the other a socialist." The LCY, which ruled for the four decades that Yugoslavia pioneered its independent path of self-managing socialism, had collapsed. In its wake came, not one successor party, but many, formed within the disparate republics and not on the best of terms with each other. The opposition parties were even more splintered, as the transformation of Yugoslavia from a one-party-state to a one-hundred-plus-party-state proceeded. There were still some tenuous threads holding together what was once whole. I phoned Zagreb to find out what was happening to the Tito Political School in Kumrovec and learned that it was in suspension. The annual round table in Cavtat was also suspended and the institute organising it had been closed. I phoned Belgrade to find out more about the plans, outlined to me in a letter from Milos Nikolić, to form a new international association of left-oriented intellectuals to continue publication of the journal *Socialism in the World* and to launch a new international conference. Meanwhile, he was trying to organise a round table of left parties in Yugoslavia, although for the first time in his adult life, he belonged to none of them.

The opposite was the case with another of my fellow philosophers, whom I also phoned in Belgrade. Mihailo Marković, who like others of the Praxis school has been on the outside of party politics for years, has been elected vice-president of the new Socialist Party of Serbia, which he was convinced would remain in power after elections. He believed that their policy represented the best solution to the problem of social property. Stocks would take the form of workers shares and would not be sold on the open market for 10% of their value as in Poland and Hungary. It would not be as in Slovenia and Croatia either, he said, where bourgeois parties had won and were committed to dismantling social property, noting that it was an unprecedented situation to have two different systems in the one country. The president of the new SPS was Slobodan Milosević. Many who had supported the Praxis philosophers from abroad were bewildered by Mihailo's association with Serbian nationalism.

Communists were still in power in Montenegro and they too were forming a new socialist party. There were 17 parties in Montenegro at this stage, but polls showed 25% support for communists, more than for any of the opposition parties. I did not encounter the bitter anti-communism here that I had elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Various young people I met outside my network of political and academic connections spoke of the communist tradition as honourable but over. "It was perfect on paper, but it just didn't work" was how more than one person put it. Among the most diverse people I drew out, there seemed to prevail a desire for something new, which would combine the economic efficiency of capitalism with the humanistic values of socialism. They were looking for a third way.

I returned to the island of Ostrovo cvijeca to visit Miodrag Vlahović again. Sitting under the fig trees and grape vines, sipping slivovic and eating fish he had just caught that morning, we went over events since I had been here the previous summer, interspersed with attempts to sum up the larger movements of history converging here. "We had the chance to prove that socialism has a human face", he reflected. "It is gone now, but there are seeds which can be preserved for the future." Back in Budva, I had the same sort of conversation with Dušan Liješević, who was mayor of the town and highly involved in the social, political and industrial life of Montenegro. While drinking in the open air as night fell, he gave a sober assessment of current situation. We toasted "To the future of Yugoslavia", believing, despite everything, that there would be one.

Dušan believed that the exposés of Tito, the ethnic tensions, the right-wing reactions, all would run their course and that both Yugoslavia and socialism had some kind of future. There was a new mood of confidence following a currency reform, bringing the convertibility of the dinar and zero inflation, which had tourists complaining about higher prices and struggling with 1,000,000 dinar notes now worth 100 dinars, but had reduced much of the economic anxiety for Yugoslavs.

Unfortunately, there was to be no future for Yugoslavia. My next trip there was cancelled. When I returned, it would no longer be Yugoslavia. It self-destructed with considerable help from destructive forces abroad. Even before that came the end of the GDR when it was subsumed into a unified Germany. The international media presented it as champagne and song, the realisation of a dream, a victory for democracy. I saw it as massive hostile takeover. Many of those I knew realised that German unification was inevitable, but they believed it should have been on more equal terms and on a more protracted time scale, leading to a new constitution and a new social order that drew from institutions and traditions from both sides. Instead, they told me, it was blitzkrieg. The west behaved like an occupying army, moving to eradicate every trace of the GDR.

As 1990 ended, it was the end of so much that had become important, not only to me, but to the history of the world. The communist movement had lit up the 20th century, clarified the contours of capitalism, set out to build a systemic alternative to it, shifted the balance of power and distribution of wealth in the world. These experiments in socialism played out in a world dominated by an ever more dominating capitalism. They did not prevail. We would have to find another way. ³

¹ Helena Sheehan *Has the Red Flag Fallen?* Dublin 1989

² I have written a detailed account of this time in Berlin, Budapest and Prague and much more in the way of experiences and reflections on this turn of history in a chapter entitled “The World Turned Upside Down” in my forthcoming book *Navigating the Zeitgeist*.

³ My thinking about how to go forward in the next period was published as *European Socialism: A Blind Alley or a Long and Winding Road?* Dublin 1992 and subsequently in chapter entitled “The New World Order” in *Navigating the Zeitgeist*. Of course, so did many others over these years, generating a literature too vast to reference here.