



Un nuevo Estado para un nuevo orden mundial: la independencia de Eslovenia

Carlos González Villa

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The end of Yugoslavia and its violent and bloody disintegration have led, practically since the very beginning of the aforementioned two processes, to the publishing of a huge amount of popular and scholarly literature. The amount of literature available about the different elements that formed part of the end and the disintegration of Yugoslavia is so numerous, that one of the biggest experts in this field felt the necessity to write a specific book to address such topic¹. Nonetheless, amongst the many books launched into the market about the end of Yugoslavia, there are just a few of them that are exclusively focused on the Slovenian path towards the “promised land” also known as the independence from Yugoslavia. That is the reason why the new book of Carlos González Villa is so relevant, because he decided to focus on one of the less known episodes of the breakup of Yugoslavia: the Slovenian independence process and the Ten Day War.

There are two main ideas in the book that clearly have permitted the author to conduct his research about the topic. On the one hand, the importance of the changes that the international community underwent through at the end of the Eighties and the beginning of the Nineties, with the end of the Cold War and the outset of the New World Order. On the other hand, the second pivotal idea

in Villa’s reasoning is the relevance of the role played by the Slovenian elites during the Eighties in order to seek the best possible solution for the Slovenian interests (and by extension for their own benefit) to the Yugoslavia crisis and the new reconfiguration of the international community. As it will be shown further, the answer of the Slovenian elites for both inner and external issues was the very same: nationalism and independence.

Before proceeding with a deeper analysis of the two crucial notions of the book, it is essential to mention briefly the formal structure of it. In this sense, the work is composed of five different chapters.

The first one deals with the topic of how the semi-peripheral states reacted to all the disruptive and radical changes that produced the twilight of the Cold War and the dawn of the New World Order and the Post-Cold War Order. The other four chapters are utterly concentrated upon what happened in Slovenia during the 1980s, a decade that later on would prove capital for the independence of this republic. In this sense, Villa explained and documented in detail the most important events that took place in Slovenia during that time framework such as the ascension of Milan Kucan to power, the relevance of the emergence of a new intellectual and young movement with Mladina as its cornerstone, the democratic evolution within the Slovenian society at the end of the 1980s, the sabotage produced by the Slovenian elites to the Ante Markovic’s economic and political

1 Ramet, S. (2005). *Thinking about Yugoslavia: Scholarly Debates about the Yugoslav Breakup and the Wars in Bosnia and Kosovo*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

plans to save the Yugoslav Federation from its collapse or the cooperation between the Slovenian and Serbian elites in order to get the purposes of both republics at the beginning of the 1990s, amongst many other phenomena analyzed by the author. All the aforementioned events and some others eventually led to the Slovenian elites to opt for the dissociation from Yugoslavia.

Once the formal division of the work is done, it is possible to start with the profound analysis and review of it. In this regard, the first element that must be examined is the role of the Slovenian elites in the process that culminated in the independence of the northernmost former Yugoslav republic. The big novelty in this idea is not that the Slovenian elites decided to abandon the Yugoslav brotherhood and unity to take the nationalist idea that Slovenia must emphasize its national sovereignty and consequently proclaim its independence from Yugoslavia (with not hesitation they counted on the popular support for their actions alongside the process). After all, this argument has been utilized profoundly by previous writers and scholars such as Francisco Veiga, Laura Silber and Allan Little, Susan Woodwad or Catherine Samary. Whereupon, the main innovation is the distinction between the political elites and the ideological elites. For this aspect, the author conveys that such distinction is truly important to understand the Slovenian independence process due to the fact that the nationalist reorganization departed from the ideological elites, starting initially thus the train towards the independence, a train which later on the political elites of the republic will join. In other words, the intellectual elites, represented mainly in the pages of Mladina and other intellectual and popular means of communication forced the representatives of the Slovenian branch of the League of Communists to join them if they did not want to arrive too late at the new reconfiguration of Slovenia within the new international order and out of the Yugoslav framework.

Nevertheless, the most attractive argument of the work is the key role that the geopolitical reorganization of international affairs played in the Slovenian independence process. By means of this idea, Villa researches the importance that the international community had during the whole Slovenian independence process. Nevertheless, it must be noted that in researching the

role played by the international community Villa never intends to replicate some of the conspirative theories, which utterly blames the international community, in particular the United States and Germany, for the breakup of Yugoslavia with the purpose of controlling the Western Balkans afterwards. This theory, that has been popular since the beginning of the Yugoslav wars, was (and it is still today) defended by several authors such as Michael Parenti, Michael Collon, Noam Chomsky, Trivo Indjić, Kate Hudson, Diana Johnstone, Michel Chossudovsky, Stephen Karganovic, Vladislav B. Sotirović and Boris Malagurski at different degrees and levels.

Hence, considering the information of the last paragraph, it is possible to establish a comparison between the Carlos Gonzalez Villa's research to the Josip Glaurdic's book, *The Hour of Europe. Western Powers and the Breakup of Yugoslavia*, because both books do examine the importance of the international sphere during the breakup of Yugoslavia without defending or using any conspirative theory. That being said, both enquiries are very different from each other.

On the one hand, the research carried out by Glaurdic states that the international community did everything in its hand to maintain together Yugoslavia using the rhetorical formula of "doing the correct thing", which within that context meant supporting the Serbian side and going against the Slovenian and Croatian camp. In other words, according to Glaurdic's research the vast majority of the responsibility for the breakup of Yugoslavia lay in the hands of Serbia while the international community, during the period that goes from 1987 up to 1992, just contributed to fuel the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina by means of its (failing) appeasement policy and strategy.

On the other hand, in accordance with Villa's investigation, the participation of the international community in the disappearance of Yugoslavia is the opposite. For this matter, Villa argues that the international community, especially the United States and Germany, helped Slovenian elites to move forward towards the independence, expressly by means of letting Slovenia to buy weaponry in the black market, diminishing the efforts of the Yugoslav federal government to save the federation and providing Slovenian elites with unofficial support for their secessionist project.

Certainly, it might appear that both researches are contradictory, but that does not mean that one of them is more correct than the other one. It is like that due to the fact that Glaurdic focused his efforts on the diplomatic services of the big superpowers, which did not want to see the breakup of Yugoslavia materializing because the maelstrom that this disintegration might (and indeed it eventually brought) bring to the most relevant actors of the international community. Nonetheless, Villa's examination of the events is concentrated upon the other elements that had influence on the foreign affairs policies of the countries. In this sense, Villa has investigated the attitude of the secret services of several countries, the stance of the US Department of Defense and all the meetings and conversations that reassured the Slovenian authorities that they counted on the green light from some of the most important superpowers to proceed with their dissociation project from Yugoslavia.

In summary, this research is relevant because, on the one hand, proves the relevant role that the Slovenian elites played not only in the independence process of Slovenia, but most importantly, in the end of Yugoslavia as a unified country. This is significant because the general consensus within the scholar community is to downplay the responsibility of Slovenia and Croatia in the end of

Yugoslavia, blaming in the process almost uniquely Serbia for the extinction of the federation. On the other hand, the examination of the international transitional period and the behaviour and actions of the most important countries within the international community are key to understand why and how the Slovenian independence took place. After all, it is highly unlikely that Slovenia would have been able to separate from Yugoslavia so easily if the international world order of the Cold War had still been in place and/or if the international community had committed itself totally to the survival of Yugoslavia as a united country. Last but not least, a quick mention to some of the sources used by the author, specially to those private interviews with some of the key players of those events like Milan Kucan for instance, because they bring some new and fresh outlook about a process that, as the same Villa acknowledges in the preface of the work, was not unknown or hidden until this research was launched, because ultimately the most important facts were well known much before Villa started his own examination of the events. Hence, assembling all those pieces together to offer us a holistic explanation on how Yugoslavia disappeared and how Slovenia was able to become an independent state is the added value that Villa has brought to the table by means of this work.