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A Case of a Very Difficult Transition: The Ritual of the Funeral of Josip Broz Tito

The Very Special Living

"Tito was the person who united us and moved us in a progressive direction. He slept with his troops. He was the prince on the white horse." These were the words of Mitra Mitrovic, lover and companion of the most famous Yugoslav dissident, Milovan Djilas, describing the years of the Second World War and the experience of the National Liberation Struggle. Mitra became partisan fighter at the very young age and later was awarded the national hero medal.¹ Though it is hard not to notice that this quotation of hers might offer a fruitful ground for a Freudian analysis of relations within the Yugoslav partisan army, it is used here for something else: this passage captures beautifully the quality of the popular sentiment around Tito's personality. On the one hand, he was very special, able to "move and unite us", exhibited extraordinary characteristics no-one of us possesses. On the other hand, this remarkable person did not want to distance himself from "ordinary" people but chose instead to share with them all that was good and bad in a particular moment. This, of course, only elevated his reputation and popularity, and if taken together, these two features promoted him into a twentieth-century's version of "the hero of our times".

Communist versions of Tito's biographies concentrated on two points. First was the fact of his poor origins and his later employment as locksmith,² for this will fit nicely into the general framework of the story on the working-class movement and how victorious it was in Yugoslavia. The second point communist biographers focused on was his uncompromised struggle for the people during the various stages of his life, all of which corresponded with crucial events in the Yugoslav history. In 1952, for his sixtieth birthday, he was celebrated as a man "who was a convict and a warrior, politician and organiser of mass-movement for liberation of the proletariat, who led rebellion against the blind fire of war, cleaned the country from the foreign

¹ Of which she was, of course, deprived after the famous Djilas' affair. But it is highly unlikely that Djilas was very much hurt or upset by this: he always thought how Mitra's participation in the war effort had made her too independently minded.

² This becomes obvious if one visits the house in Northern Croatia where he was born. His parents were peasants, lived in a simple house of a small village, often not having enough food for their eight children. The house was turned into a memorial-centre during his life, with the conscious effort to keep it as humble as it was in his childhood's time. Except from the fresh paint and the war uniform he wore in 1944 when soldiers of Nazi-Germany attempted (and almost succeeded) to assassinate him, not much was added to the belongings in the house. The picture of a wooden baby-cradle which stands in the middle of the central room in the house was an often depicted motif in school-textbooks: the text under the picture usually read a more or less poetic re-statement how it is from this poor place that He will rise.

occupiers in a difficult and bloody war, gave her back her sea, islands and cities, liberated his people from class exploitation, laid grounds for development of socialism and who today helps the country to overcome the backwardness and rise into the line of civilised peoples."³ Again, if combined, these two emphases tell a story of an ordinary man with an extraordinary life, but, what is very important, this pattern was never pictured as an example, something everyone of us with enough élan and work might achieve. In a sense, what was pictured was a perversion of the "American dream": he was quite a normal guy with a very suspicious background, and he did become president and the most celebrated figure of the country during all its existence, but you cannot even dream to come close to his fame, because he was after all very extraordinary in all his "ordinariness".

The tone of his biographies is also quite instructive, as it insists on the atmosphere of intimacy and friendship. Tito was never portrayed as cold or distant,⁴ made of iron or some other "special stuff"; rather, he was often called "teacher", "protector", "friend".⁵ In their message to Tito not even two months before his death, the Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia conveyed: "..... our **love for you** which knows no words to be expressed. Our wish for your soon recovery is **on the lips and in the heart** of all Yugoslavs. Because you are **inside of us** as much as we are all yours. Because we **reveal you our love** of which you have taught us. **We love you**, our dear comrade Tito."⁶ We can speak here about not only friendly but love relationship between two entities, and it is impossible to oversee the resemblance of this discourse to the one used in Latin Christianity to describe how people felt about their saint protectors. (Though, admittedly, the latter was not as much burdened by erotic overtones as the former.) Relying on Peter Brown, we might thus argue that by picturing Tito as a *patronus* and an *amicus* and by building an intimate relationship between him and his protégées (Yugoslavs), a very "rich combination of power and

³ Miroslav Krleža, "Barjaktar Svjetskog Mira", in: *Bilo je casno zivjeti s Titom* (Zagreb, 1980), p. 5.

⁴ My Belgrade colleague, Ildiko Erdei, warned me that there were representations of Tito's personality quite different from those which I describe (for example, Tito's figure in a poem by Vladimir Nazor *Naprijed* [Ahead] in which he has "eyes blue as steel" or in a natural size sculpture in front of the house in which he was born, made by A. Augustincic). I believe though that these were rather small in number and usually connected to a concrete historical situation which demanded from him to exhibit his "strength" (such as the 1948 break with Stalin).

⁵ That he was not really perceived as such by all people, should not be especially emphasised. But let me mention here only a minor episode illustrating the other side. During one of his numerous trips, Tito was invited to visit Canada. For certain reasons, Canada had a couple of pockets of highly nationalistic or sometimes even Ustasa-minded Croatian emigrants, one of whom was the late Croatian Minister of Defence, Gojko Susak. Susak, then a pizza-man somewhere in Canada, decided during Tito's visit to show his anti-Yugoslav and anti-Tito sentiments: he put a poor little white pig alive in a black coffin, writing on the pig's back "TITO". For that, he was prosecuted (and found guilty) by Canadian authorities. The very same Susak came to Croatia at the beginning of the power-struggles in 1991 and became one of Tudjman's most trusted allies. In his "dissident" biography he of course did not fail to mention the Canadian episode which he described as a part of his political fight against Yugoslavia abroad, for which he was prosecuted and punished. He, however, failed to explain what were the reasons for this prosecution: the Canadian authorities, namely, could not care less about his political views and agenda. He was accused by the Canadian Society for Protection of Animal Rights, for they have found that he was mistreating the poor pig. The Canadian Court agreed with this and accordingly reached the verdict.

⁶ In. *Bilo je casno*, p. 26., emphasis mine. It should be noted here that, unlike in English, the word "comrade" in Serbo-Croatian has a meaning very close to the word "friend". Today it is loaded with its communist past, while the original meaning has been almost (but not entirely) lost.

intimacy"⁷ was established which helped, in my view, to keep him close to the masses without at the same time undermining or threatening his position of unquestioned power: one was supposed to believe him not on the grounds of fear but love.

Whether the second Yugoslav state which came into being in 1945 was only Tito's or someone else's work, too, I do not want to debate here. The fact remains that the country disjoined in 1941 and that it was put together at the end of the war. It is also indisputable that this process was led by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, on the head of which was J. B. Tito. Due to historical developments unfolding after the war, Tito became (or was turned into) a mythical figure, and he found himself at the centre of the symbolical universe of the country. He was the one who, as we have seen from the quotation before-mentioned, saved and liberated her, and who fights for her prosperity and progress further. Whether it would have been possible for the country to survive even without him, I also do not want to discuss here. In any case, in his life-time he became the centre of the balance and the crucial bearer of the country's strength. As such, he was not supposed to die. But he did. As the time has showed, this was a big mistake. Huge.

Relying on Jacques Lacan, Slavoj Zizek argues that totalitarian leaders, as well as the classical-pre-bourgeois Master, possess two bodies: their ordinary, natural body and "a sublime, ethereal, mystical body personifying the State".⁸ As such, they not only die twice (the first death is real, biological, and the second is its symbolisation), but, what is in the context of this paper far more important, at the moment of their natural death they threaten to take with them the symbolical body they carry: the State. In his excellent study of the funerary ritual of the medieval kings, Ernst Kantorowich showed how medieval funerary practices ensured that the transition of the symbolical body from the dead king to his son, the successor, *via* certain royal signs was very transparent and could not be questioned or compromised for a single moment: the continuity of the State was thus guaranteed.⁹ The totalitarian leader, however, does not have the external point of reference to legitimise his rule and cannot therefore "adopt" his successor -- he must find another way to extract the promise of life for the posterity.

How Do You Bury The God of Life?

For rather obvious reasons, not many people from ex-Yugoslavia are willing to talk today honestly about their reactions when they first heard the news: "Tito is dead". There is only one, highly heterogeneous group which describes openly these first scenes. Quite curiously, this group includes people politically as different from another, as it is the case with the above-mentioned Croatian nationalist and late minister Gojko Susak and a half-Serbian friend and colleague of mine, Bosko Spasojevic. Both of them have told the same story: upon hearing the news, the family gathered and opened a two-hundred dollars bottle of whiskey to celebrate. However, for the majority of people from Yugoslavia, May 4, 1980, when the news about Tito's

⁷ Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints. Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (University of Chicago Press), p. 63.

⁸ Slavoj Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (Verso, London, New York, 1995), p. 145.

⁹ Ernst Kantorowich, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton University Press, a reprint edition 1998).

death was broadcasted, represented a very traumatic point. He was considered to be the sole guarantor of the country's peace and stability, and now he was gone. This newly emerged void had to be, to put it plastically, filled. The carefully designed funerary ritual was to serve this purpose.¹⁰

Before turning to the ritual, it should be noted that Tito's death was hardly an unexpected event to have occurred. He was brought to the hospital in Ljubljana, Slovenian capitol, on January 12 with very difficult health problems: Tito was a long-term diabetic and his organism lost a lot of strength fighting the disease. His arrival to and stay in the hospital were widely publicised, both in domestic and foreign press. On January 20, his left leg, already acutely attacked by gangrene (often, as we know, with diabetics), had to be amputated. Using Turnerian terminology we might very cautiously suggest that the case of "bodily partition" announced the social drama which is to occur, and as such it already provoked a crisis which was quickly redressed -- the very next day what could be termed "the season of letter-writing" was open. People from all over Yugoslavia, as well as Yugoslavs abroad, started sending letters to Tito with the best wishes for soon recovery. Only from Kragujevac, a middle-sized city in Serbia which experienced a disastrous Nazi-pogrom in the Second World War, 120.000 letters were written (later published in seventy-five volume book) and sent to Ljubljana. Letters were signed sometimes by individuals, sometimes families, then companies, Tito's war-friends, schools, etc. The content of the letters deserves certainly a thorough analysis, one which cannot be a subject of this study. Suffice it thus only to say that the discourse used was again rather intimate: letters opened with "dear Tito", or "dear and beloved Tito", and then read statements saying how he has to recover in order to lead the country safely further, how his love could be felt in every corner of Yugoslavia but even abroad,¹¹ and how his full recovery was absolutely necessary for the happiness of Yugoslavia.¹² People were very obviously afraid, and it was no accident that it was precisely Kragujevac that wrote all those letters. The attack of an illness on Tito's body was internalised and felt as an attack on the country itself.

They were not the only ones who felt the up-coming drama, and accordingly, not the only ones engaged in letter-writing. Telegrams poured from all over the world, again from "ordinary" people, as well as from states(wo)men. Quite appropriately, heads of the non-aligned countries wrote to underline how Tito's return to the political scene was necessary for peace and stability of the world. Communist leaders' letters (Brezhnev, Kadar, Zivkov, and others alike) emphasised his achievements in building of the socialist world and, what is very interesting, they all expressed the hope that he would continue his work on strengthening "the friendly relations between our two countries".¹³ The West also paid close attention: Jimmy

¹⁰ For the analysis of Tito's burial I use Victor Turner's "social drama approach".

¹¹ Belgrade foot-ball team on the match in Australia wrote: "Even here we can feel your love and sense your magnificent life-work." (*Bilo je casno*, p. 17.)

¹² Children from a children's hospital signed a letter which read "you have to persevere and carry on, so that we could do the same". (*Bilo je casno*, p. 17.) In the prayers for his health, even the god's name was allowed -- "May God protect you", said a peasant-woman. (*Bilo je casno*, p. 15.) There were even grotesque children's telegrams reading "Don't be sad about your leg; if needs be, we will run instead of you." (*Bilo je casno*, p. 41.)

¹³ Almost as if they were all dictated from Moscow, they underlined Tito's importance for continuation of "friendly" or "close" relations between the countries. (*Bilo je casno*, p. 21.)

Carter, Margareth Thatcher, Queen Elisabeth II, presidents of all West-European countries did not fail to express their concern for Tito's health.

During the last week of January, foreign press, anticipating the rupture, published numerous articles praising Tito's life-work, his struggle for world-peace, his wise politics in East-West orientations. "Herald Tribune" put him in line with Churchill, De Gaulle, Roosevelt, Stalin and Mao as "the last historical leader from the period of World War Two", the one who "rejected Kreml's ultimatums as well as Washington's courting",¹⁴ "Le Nouvel Observateur" emphasised how Tito's "little country defied successfully Hitler's Reich, Truman's America, and Stalin's Soviet Union",¹⁵ and "La Stampa" insisted that "it is harder to say who is more extraordinary, the man or his country".¹⁶ Yugoslavia kept close ear to international echoes and copied reactions which were proving the importance and uniqueness of Tito's figure; it was as if the obituaries were being written three months before his death, as an overture which was supposed to help the transition.

Three days before he died, the leading Zagreb daily published an article in which, as far as I was able to establish, for the first time the crucial slogan of the post-Tito era was used: "Tito - that is all of us!" Knowing what was about to follow, the journalist wrote: "Tito, that is all of us, that is the symbol of survival of this country. Notwithstanding what may happen, he will continue to lead us. We cannot betray Tito and his work, for this would mean betraying ourselves at the same time."¹⁷ This was the crucial moment, because it placed the equation sign between Tito and "us", even before his physical death. In my view, this was a necessary step, and, as I will show later, it was repeated, more or less successfully, throughout the funerary ceremony. Why was it necessary? Because Tito was, as we have seen, all that the Yugoslav state was about. It was not socialism or some other ideological doctrine that embodied the essence of Yugoslavia; rather, its embodiment was a real human being, namely, Tito. Up until his death, there had not been an attempt to divorce his figure from the fate of the country, quite on the contrary -- all turning points in Yugoslav history were inextricably linked to his character. Though it was highly unlikely that during thirty-five years of his rule, all major and minor decisions affecting the state were indeed solely his, they were presented and accepted as such, for his figure automatically guaranteed legitimacy and wide popular support.

It was obviously sensed that such power-constellation could be extremely dangerous, for it posed a serious problem once the physical person incarnating the destiny of the country was not there any longer. Since it was clear that Tito cannot have a real successor -- he was not a King and could not thus transfer his charisma on his offspring, and because he was so special, no-one of his associates could bear the burden of his heavily loaded identity¹⁸ -- it was necessary to replace him by another symbol which could guarantee the continuity upon his death. It was thought that

¹⁴ "Herald Tribune" from January 22, 1980, as quoted in *Bilo je casno*, p. 25.

¹⁵ "Le Nouvel Observateur" from January 21, 1980, as quoted in *Bilo je casno*, p. 23.

¹⁶ "La Stampa" from January 24, 1980, as quoted in *Bilo je casno*, p. 25.

¹⁷ "Vjesnik" from May 1, 1980, as quoted in *Bilo je casno*, p. 31.

¹⁸ Though many of his associates were undoubtedly very intelligent and competent people, with exception of Tito's closest war-circle (friends from WWII most of whom died before him), they all looked extremely pale and totally uninteresting, almost invisible when compared to Tito.

Yugoslav people united might represent such a symbol, and throughout the funerary ritual the attempt was made to construct them as one entity.

It is interesting to observe that the crisis provoked by Tito's death, according to Turner the second stage of the social drama, was very brief, or more correctly, that it overlapped with "redressive action"¹⁹ the aim of which was to seal off the rupture. Having in mind the above-mentioned article, it could even be argued that re-dress began prior to the moment when Tito's death physically introduced the breach. However, the short crisis was long enough to manifest the drama behind. As the news was read on the full football stadium in Split, a city on the Croatian coast, the turbulent cheering among the crowd was first replaced by complete silence, only to be followed by an even more tumultuous song the lines of which were "Comrade Tito, we swear to you, that we will never abandon your way".²⁰ Pictures from the stadium show players lying and crying on the ground, others hiding their face from cameras. According to the news-stories from the period, the reactions were similar throughout the country. But it is important to underline that the shock and grief were complemented by almost simultaneous expressions of determination to endure. Special editions of Yugoslav dailies from May 4 insist that faces of people on the streets were not ripped by pain, though pain was certainly there: what was, however, more important, was pride and resoluteness to continue on these very same faces. The following picture, taken somewhere on the streets of Yugoslavia, is in this sense paradigmatic: it depicts a group of men of various age-groups, young and old alike, clearly shocked by the news they just heard. Their faces are torn by pain, tears in the eyes mix with the rain and become indistinguishable. In the centre of the picture, however, are not tears but men's clenched fists; in a sense, the sorrow and grief were important, but what counted more was the wish and the ambition to keep on.²¹

This was at the same time the leitmotif of the whole funerary ritual which started next day, May 5, in Ljubljana.²² The coffin was brought to the rail-way station, already crowded with thousands of observers, and covered by the Yugoslav flag. After the speeches delivered by Slovenian functionaries, all of which amounted to "proud sorrow",²³ the coffin was put on the so-called Tito's Blue Train, a special train-composition which Tito used on his trips throughout the country. The train started its journey going in the direction of Zagreb.

In each city or town on the way to Zagreb, people formed lines along the rail-road. But the train stopped only when it reached the Croatian capitol. If we were to believe journalists' estimations, more than 500.000 people gathered around the Zagreb rail-way station.²⁴ There the coffin was unloaded from the train and exhibited to the

¹⁹ Victor Turner, "Dewey, Dilthey, and Drama: An Essay in the Anthropology of Experience", in: *The Anthropology of Experience*, ed. by Victor W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner (University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1986), p. 39.

²⁰ It seems important to note that Split had a strong partisan and anti-fascist movement in WWII.

²¹ In *Bilo je casno*, p. 51.

²² On May 5, 1980, major dailies in all Yugoslav republics devoted the whole issue to Tito and his work, and published on the front page a big black-and-white photograph of him.

²³ "Delo" from May 5, 1980, as quoted in *Bilo je casno*, p. 65.

²⁴ The number in "Vjesnik" from May 5, 1980, as quoted in *Bilo je casno*, p. 73. Even if the number was exaggerated, the pictures taken that day clearly show how the platform of the station, the neighbouring square, and all streets around were suffocated by bystanders. Not all of them were there voluntarily. My mother tells me that in her firm the action was taken early in the morning to push

observers, albeit again covered by the Yugoslav flag. Next thing important was that on the platform there were no black flags; only red, state and republic flags were hanging around. The absolutely dominant colour was red, additionally emphasised by wraiths made of red carnations. Again speeches, again "proud silence", then the folk-song from the region of Northern Croatia the title of which read simply "Thank You". The coffin was loaded into the train, and the journey to Belgrade continued.

In the country's capitol, the coffin was brought to the Parliament building, "where he was creating Yugoslavia, our present and our future",²⁵ put on the catafalque, covered by the Yugoslav flag and decorated with numerous medals Tito received in his life-time, both at home and abroad. Red carpets were placed around, which again with red flags and flowers produced a very special, not sombre but dignified atmosphere. Black colour was to be seen only on the suits of state-officials who came in groups to pay the respect. There were no Tito's photographs around. And this was the picture that would be encountered by many Yugoslavs, for now the "sight-seeing" march started, during which hundreds of people came to pay their respect. As the news-paper stories insisted, old and young, women and children, Tito's war-companions and pioneers, workers and peasants, they all came;²⁶ "hearts are here beating faster, here, next to the catafalque, millions of hearts are beating for one big heart that had to stop".²⁷ But what all these hearts saw was not a body, it was not even a coffin. They were allowed to watch only what relying on Turner might be called the dominant symbol: the Yugoslav flag. Tito was already stripped of his natural, physical body, and on the parade only the symbolical one was exhibited.

Parallel to this, another track of mourning was taking place around the country. On the collective level, various (state or otherwise) organisations arranged commemorative meetings on which the importance of following Tito's work was repeatedly asserted. The most telling episode comes from commemoration organised by the Yugoslav People's Army, where the commanding officer Nikola Ljubicic ended his speech, in my opinion, quite provocatively: "Some people around the world have asked: what will happen to Yugoslavia, now that Tito is gone? Our answer is: what will happen is - Tito!"²⁸ I assume he did not really think at that moment that Tito was actually dead and that if this was what would happen to Yugoslavia, this could have only meant that the country could not survive very long its founder.

On a somewhat more personal level, people were invited to express their emotions and write down the impressions in various "books of memories" that were set up by companies, schools, institutions of various kind. This was a highly ritualised procedure, but a necessary one to include all strata of population in the community of the mourners. In books arranged in grammar-schools, children of the

people to go and watch the ceremony. But it is not true, as some would like to believe today, that under the threat of punishment, everyone was obliged to go. Though she respected Tito to a great extent, my mother did not feel like going and did not experience consequences of any kind.

²⁵ "Politika" from May 5, 1980, as quoted in *Bilo je casno*, p. 92.

²⁶ Around the catafalque, the so-called "guards of honour" were organised; the ritual was that the groups of eight (wo)men formed two parallel lines on each side of the coffin and stood there for a minute in silence. The groups were gathered mostly on professional or some other joint platform: miners, architects, pioneers, etc. These were strictly organised "little rituals" the aim of which was to create little sub-communities of mourners inside of the big, Yugoslav community.

²⁷ "Vecernji list" from May 6, 1980, as quoted in *Bilo je casno*, p. 116.

²⁸ Nikola Ljubicic as quoted in *Bilo je casno*, p. 124.

maximum age of sixteen inscribed interesting comments. A sixteen-years old boy wrote: "Tito lives! He is the legend of our revolution. Tito - that is all of us! In our hearts there is more Tito than ourselves. To have sixteen years, this means to have little, but to have Tito, this means to have a lot!"²⁹ Or, a nine-years old girl: "Never again shall I have dreams as lovely as I had before. Never again shall I be happy as I once was."³⁰

Finally, May 8 was the day of the burial. The coffin was taken in front of the Parliament building and put on the display one more time; needless to say, again covered by the flag. The square before the Parliament was carefully designed, divided into areas on which visitors were or were not allowed. Close to the coffin there was Tito's family, his wife and two sons, but only in the line with the highest representatives of the Yugoslav state. This was a nice illustration of the relations towards Tito's family in general: while it couldn't have been denied that the family existed, it was never given too much space or popularity, not even once he was dead. For Tito was just as much a part of the bigger, Yugoslav family, as he was a part of his own, biological, if not even more. Behind the Yugoslav *famiglia*, the next group of mourners was formed by states-(wo)men from all over the world. Then there was an empty space marked by men in uniforms, and only much behind them there were citizens of Belgrade and other "ordinary" Yugoslavs; they were pushed so far aside that they could not possibly see anything. In a sense, in death they were much more further away from their "dear Tito" than they have ever been in his life-time.

The ceremony before the Parliament building was rather short, but it had one interesting and a very important detail. As the speech of the new president of the CK of the League of Communist of Yugoslavia, Stevan Doronjski, was over,³¹ the chorus, which at the beginning of the ceremony sang the national anthem, started singing war, but what is more important, folk songs from all Yugoslav republics. There is quite a number of songs celebrating Yugoslavia and the state on the whole, but for certain reasons it was thought that national folk-songs would fit the scenario better; they were most probably supposed to show the unity and presence of all Yugoslav nations in front of the dead body.

From the Parliament building to the place where he will be buried, Tito was transported on an open car, coffin covered by the flag.³² The huge procession was going the same Belgrade streets which Tito's army took in the eve of World War Two, as Belgrade was liberated. Eventually, they came to the "Complex May 25" which consisted of a museum with some of Tito's belongings³³ and a not that big building called "The House of Flowers"; in the latter he will be buried. It is interesting to note

²⁹ *Bilo je casno*, p. 130.

³⁰ *Bilo je casno*, p. 130. Attempts were made to match children's reactions with the reactions of the rest of the society. If they cried, their tears were thus seen as tears for "dear Tito" -- yet another proof of his glory, when he was able to make the innocent cry. But a closer look reveals a problem in this reading: as an eight-years old girl testified in her book-entry, upon hearing the news "my mother started to cry. Then I turned towards the window and started crying, too." (*Bilo je casno*, p. 130.)

³¹ The speech itself was very instructive, especially sentences like "Tito has given us answers to the questions such as who we are and what we are". (Doronjski, as quoted in *Bilo je casno*, p. 201.)

³² It took them two hours to transport him between those two places, though according to my Belgrade friend Bosko Spasojevic, this should be a half-an-hour walk. But, the amount of people walking slowly behind the open car was rather large, and this could account for the time difference.

³³ These are not there any longer, and the space is used for art-exhibits.

that "Complex May 25" is not isolated from the city of Belgrade; it is located close to the elite-area but can very easily be accessed from the city centre.³⁴

Before the "House of Flowers", coffin with the flag was exhibited for the last time. It was deposited in the centre of a round area, resembling somewhat the Roman amphitheatre. There the whole world (that is, the representatives of 127 countries³⁵) gathered to pay the tribute and help in a way with their presence to bury Tito. It is important to note that all world leaders were sitting together, with no guards or lines of any sort between them: Brezhnev, Thatcher, Husein, Lilly Carter, Mitterand, Willy Brandt, Kim Il Sung, and many more shared the same position towards the dead. The Yugoslav press celebrated this picture as "Tito's last victory", for even after his death he was able to bring the divided world together.³⁶ There is a strong case to be made that he was more successful in bringing the world than his own country together.

Finally, the coffin was brought inside of the "House of Flowers"³⁷ and put beneath the white marble cube, on which the golden inscription read: "Josip Broz Tito, 1892 - 1980". In the room around the cube, there were all sorts of flowers planted, tropical or ordinary, and due to the size of the windows, the whole scene was bathing in sun-light. The centre was occupied by extremely cold white marble, and the surrounding was an obviously artificial attempt to plant the seed of life, "nature", close to death. But nowhere in the nature can you find that many fully diverse flowers at the same place; they simply do not grow together. And usually, scenes which are overwhelmed by the diversity of colours, as it is the case here, are at the same time characterised if not by noise than at least by an equal variety of sounds. But because this was the place of death, there had to be silence. The result was that "ordinary" people when coming to the grave-sight must have felt rather strange: trapped optically in a cage of violent colours, their ears heavily burdened by the obligatory silence, and their olfactory nerves overwhelmed by unusual tropical smell -- on the top of everything, the tropical flora demanded that the room be heated beyond the normal and comfortable air-temperature. As if the *impresarios* of the ritual did not want the mourners to spend more time than really necessary in the physical proximity of the Saint.

Dead Man Walking

What were the direct results of the burial? How successfully was the promise of life derived? Was it obvious in 1980 and ten subsequent Yugoslav years that the process of transition (during which Tito was supposed to leave the world of the living, only to be re-incorporated later) basically failed? My very cautious answer would be that it was obvious. With this I do not want to suggest that the funerary ceremony was inadequate; my suggestion is only that it would have been very difficult to

³⁴ Furthermore, there are no cemeteries or graves near-by. Tito was too much of a saint that *depositio ad sanctos* could be carried out, for his presence would literally abolish everyone around him.

³⁵ Here is the list of countries from which no-one came: Haiti, Guatemala, Salvador, Honduras, Surinam, Paragvaj, Chad, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Kuvajt, South Korea, Laos, Papua New Guinea, Albania (and two or three more which I was not able to read from the map). From the following countries, not representatives of the state, but of what was in 1980 called "progressive parties and democratic movements" came: Chile, Dominican Republic, South Sahara, South-African Republic and Namibia.

³⁶ "Politika" from May 8, 1980, as quoted in *Bilo je casno*, p. 158.

³⁷ This is the ultimate moment when the flag finally left the coffin.

arrange an adequate burial for Tito without at the same time ringing the last bell for the country, because very little, if any, attempts were made prior to his death to stabilise the identity of Yugoslavia around some other focal point.

What were the crucial "mistakes" performed during the ritual, as I see them. I have already tried to allude to the fact that the construction of the community of the mourners did not really proceed very logically. If we follow the coffin and various ceremonies around it, we can see that they were of a highly particularistic nature: songs sung were national folk-songs, too many wraiths were laid on which the inscription read "Croatian" or "Serbian" (etc.) and not "Yugoslav". Instead of insisting on what could be attached to the supra-national level, the lines dividing the Yugoslav nations were constantly emphasised. While world-leaders were all placed together, so to speak "under the same roof", for each Yugoslav republic a new, little niche was provided; this could have hardly led to the construction of a homogenous entity. On the top of that came the fact that representatives of the Yugoslav republics were not really representative for the body of people that was supposed to stand behind them. They were all very old, some of them partially politically discredited, and absolutely not a single figure among them could stand for a source of identity; they occupied their positions because once upon a time Tito was there to provide the legitimacy they lacked -- but not any longer. We can almost say that the world united behind Tito's figure better because on the part of the international community, a whole group of real people came, while from Yugoslavia there was only a bunch of (still) walking cadavers.

And then, there was the issue of the flag. Tito underwent on May 4 his physical death, and the ritual was supposed to divorce his physical from the symbolical body and guarantee how the symbol will outlast its physicality. But then instead of separating the two entities apart as far as possible, they were put not only in the physical proximity but in direct contact. As a consequence, when one watches the pictures from the burial, it is from time to time not clear at all what or whom is being buried: a human being (Tito) or a symbol (flag, and thus Yugoslavia). This became especially obvious during the transportation of the coffin from the Parliament building to the "House of Flowers", as the procession was going through the streets of Belgrade: what millions of people saw *via* TV on the back of the open vehicle was not a representation of the subject or the subject of the burial himself -- they saw the symbol of the country that was slowly going towards its tomb.

I am also tempted to say that this clumsiness of the ritual was noticed by the *impressarios* of the ritual, too. They did not manage to bury Tito physically, and the before-mentioned transition of the centre of the symbolical universe from Tito to the "Yugoslav people", started even before his physical death, was also very difficult to achieve; this is why they could not really "kill" Tito effectively after 1980. They needed him as a source of legitimacy and were very confused and did not quite know what to do with his personality in the last ten years of Yugoslavia. As a consequence, even after 1980, children learned in schools slogans stating "For homeland with Tito", and the custom of writing letters to Tito for his birthday was kept alive many years after his death. This means that an attempt was made to keep his physical body alive, as well, not only the symbolical one. But also, songs were sung saying "Tito lives, Tito lives, Tito - that is all of us", and school-children planted regularly around their school-facilities eighty-eight roses or eighty-eight young trees for Tito. In a sense,

Tito remained roaming around like a good spirit, a vampire of a sort -- not alive, but not completely dead either.³⁸

³⁸ Like a real flesh-and-blood vampire, Tito has waited only three years to re-appear among "his" people again. In 1994, Serbian film-director Zelimir Zilnik filmed a documentary, in which he dressed his main and only actor in Tito's uniform and then let him walk the streets of Belgrade. The actor's resemblance with Tito was indeed astonishing, but so were the reactions of Belgrade people. In the film we see people coming close to "Tito", talking to him, asking him how and where he was, and then starting quite normally conversations about the current political situation. No matter how strange the scene was, passengers on the streets were not caught by surprise; they addressed their former leader, complained about his successors declaring them incompetent, commented on recent historic events. In the same year, more precisely on July 22, 1994, Tito stroke again. This was the date when he got his own Internet home page at <http://www.titoville.com>. On these pages, Tito plays for us some of his songs, we can hear him delivering his old speeches, he flips through his photo-album, gives us a thorough version of his life-story, together with "juicy" parts, and then he invites page-visitors to send him e-mails. The tradition of letter-writing to Tito will obviously never die. And people listen to him, as many years before, and write. And while there are some angry voices among them (these come, needless to say, from Croats cursing him for keeping Croatia under the Serbian custody in the communist Yugoslavia, as well as from Serbs blaming him for letting Croats have "their way" with Serbia in the same time-period), it could safely be stated that the great majority writes with sentimental overtones. Some of them are openly calling him to come back from wherever he might be right now and take care of the "filthy scum-bags" who are unsuccessfully trying to fill out his shoes.