

# THE TITO EFFECT

Charisma as political legitimacy

## **TITO: Charisma as political legitimacy - an excess of memory**

Radonja Leposavić

*Tito's results still endure, today in the shape  
of the active impact of his revised picture.*

Todor Kuljić

Josip Broz never heard of Max Weber. Or perhaps he did. Perhaps he even knew, perhaps he was acquainted with the social theory of this “Marx of the bourgeoisie”. Both possibilities – that he knew and that he didn’t – are equally likely and unlikely. And equally insignificant today. But they speak eloquently of the fact that we know virtually nothing about Josip Broz while we feel that we know everything – down to the smallest detail. Or – not to hide myself

behind an imaginary collective identity – I know nothing about Broz while I feel that I know everything.

As for Max Weber, however, it can be said with certainty that he was not aware of Josip Broz. In fact, there is some slight possibility that the two of them may have passed each other by chance in the streets of Munich or Mannheim before the Great War – in the period when Broz was wandering around Germany looking for a job, but this is merely a literary possibility. In 1918, Weber would become a consultant to the German delegation at the Versailles Peace Conference – the same one at which the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, the future Yugoslavia, was dealt with as a “state in progress”. He was then involved in drafting the Constitution of the Weimar Republic. He died of the consequences of the Spanish Flu on June 14, 1920, in Munich. He was 56.



In May 1920, Josip Broz turned 28. And had a fair amount of union, political, military, war, revolution and – most certainly – life experience. The “black waiter’s suit” – of which, as a teenager, he dreamed – had not yet materialised (don’t let the photograph fool you), and yet it had already become too small. The symbol of a naïve desire from early youth; an unrealised, anecdotal past. It may be assumed that it would have been no different even if Broz had fulfilled this wish of his in time, but we will never know what the history of the international workers’ movement, the history of the communist movement, the history of World War Two or the history of the “second”

Comrade Tito in the village of Veliko Trojstvo, outside Samuel Polak’s mill in 1922 or 1923. Comrade Tito is wearing a villager’s hat on his head. (photograph and caption from Vladimir Dedijer’s book *Josip Broz Tito – prilozi za biografiju*, Belgrade, 1955) (*Josip “Tito” Broz - Appendices to a Biography*)

Yugoslavia might have been had Broz read, in 1922, Weber's posthumously published book *Wirtschaft und Gessellschaft* (Economy and Society), at least the third chapter on types of domination. Perhaps even if he had, everything would have been the same, and perhaps it would not have. Both possibilities – that it would have and that it wouldn't have – are equally likely and unlikely. And equally insignificant today. Unless they are not insignificant.

In 1976, Belgrade publishing house Prosveta published Weber's book in a translation by Olga and Tihomir Kostrešević under the title *Privreda i društvo*. Tito was 84 at the time. The book was published in two volumes, in a print run of 5,000, as part of the series *Karijatide* (Caryatids). The third chapter, *Types of Domination* includes the following:

*There are three pure types of legitimate domination. The validity of the claims to*

*legitimacy may be based on:*

1. *rational grounds: resting on a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands (legal authority) – or*

2. *traditional grounds: resting on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them (traditional authority) – or finally,*

3. *charismatic grounds: resting on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him (charismatic authority).*

*(...) In the case of charismatic authority, it is the charismatically qualified leader as such who is obeyed by virtue of personal trust in his revelation, his heroism or his exemplary qualities so far as they fall within the scope of the individual's belief in his charisma...*

It doesn't matter... today it doesn't matter how it would have been – because it was how it was, but I think ... in fact I believe that it would have been different had Josip Broz read Weber's book. If he had read it "in time", soon after it was first published, in the twenties of the last century. Later, it would have been too late, later: when Tito was already caught up in the machinery of history, when the battle had begun, when the war had begun, when domination had "arrived"...

**I believe** that it all would have been different, because I believe in enlightenment. In spite of everything. And I believe that Josip Broz was a serious man. And I cannot imagine a serious man who would "agree to" any type of *legitimate authority* other than that based on *rational grounds*. And here I am caught in a trap, because it is evident that Tito based his authority to a large extent on *charismatic*

*grounds*. The present exhibition demonstrates this well. So how can this contradiction be resolved. Something here does not add up.

Because I am neither willing nor able to relinquish my faith in enlightenment, I am left with no choice but to consider this other matter: the seriousness of Josip Broz. Why, in fact, do I believe that at issue here is a serious man. Because I think... because **I know** that the project at whose helm he stood – which, as Tito, he symbolised – was a very serious project of economic, national, class, native, individual and every other kind of emancipation. Liberational, modernisational... in one word, enlightenment. And so here, once again, it's a matter of faith. **I know** that something is good and *I believe* that only serious people stand behind it. There is also a Dadaist twist possible here – and this, by the way, is something very dear to me in

artistic practice, but this time I'm betting on dual belief. For Pascalian reasons – but after the death of God. Otherwise I could bid you farewell immediately! Because if I didn't believe in this unfortunately unlikely combination – what else would there be for me on Planet Earth?

So I believe in enlightenment and that Josip Broz was a serious man. And I don't know how to explain the apparent – perhaps even the dominant – *charismatic grounds* for Tito's domination. So once again I shall resort to nothing other than the enlightenment in which I believe and assume that everything would have been different had Josip Broz read Max Weber's book in time. Then he would have **known**... and he would have endeavoured not to base his domination on *charismatic grounds* at all. I believe that he would have made this endeavour because – given that I believe in enlightenment – I believe

in knowledge and in the seriousness of the person who symbolises an important project.

Perhaps – having read Max Weber's book – Josip Broz would have headed to America by sometime in 1923 and forged a great acting career based on charisma. Perhaps, but this again is only a literary possibility. The real question is: would what we had here have been possible without the *charismatic grounds* for Tito's domination? But this is a historically impossible question because – as we well know – everything is mutually interwoven. But theoretically: was it possible in a society such as Yugoslavia after World War Two, to implement any emancipatory project through domination which wasn't based on *charismatic grounds*? This is a difficult question and opinions are divided. In the second edition of the *sociological-historical study TITO*, published in Zrenjanin

in 2005, Todor Kuljić introduces the following definition: *The presumption of modernisation is rationalisation and, in politics, as in other activities, this is separation from religion and then the acceptance of technological and economic novelties, the encouragement of horizontal and vertical mobility, the strengthening of legality, the canvassing of broad popular support and the lessened use of compulsion.* So, if modernisation presumes rationalisation, it would be coherent for it to be implemented by domination based on *rational grounds (legal authority)*. However, in the very next paragraph, Kuljić writes: *Because modernisation is not always based on a less or more voluntary acceptance of new experiences (because of the resistance of tradition or the lack of institutional channels, it is thus not always linked with the strengthening of divided domination (nineteenth-century European liberalism is*

*an exception).* There are more frequently examples of imposing modernisation through the authoritarian exercise of undivided power which relies on traditional political culture (one-party socialist regimes and authoritarian power in undeveloped countries) or the cruel consolidation of capitalism with the help of classical slavery, as in the U.S in the nineteenth century.

So things get more complicated. Without the *charismatic grounds* for domination by Tito or someone else – that is, on the basis of the *rational grounds of legitimacy* or by means of *legal authority* – the project of rapid modernisation could have been carried out in Yugoslavia after World War Two only on the very unlikely presumption that it would be exactly here that the historic exception of nineteenth-century European liberalism would be repeated. The chances are that Josip Broz

did not believe in such miracles. However, continues Kuljić:

*Although authoritarian measures can encourage modernisation, the undefeated tradition of authoritarian political culture permits only incomplete modernisation.*

Which now, in hindsight, indicates the dilemma which the citizens of Yugoslavia never faced politically: slow modernisation with *traditional authority* or incomplete modernisation with a charismatic leader. Unfortunately the historical and cultural conditions for the third option – the *rational* one – did not exist.

A photograph of Comrade Tito from December 1937, while he was illegally in Austria. The courier who accompanied Comrade Tito took this photograph in a place called Bischofshofen (photograph and caption from Vladimir Dedijer's book *Josip Broz Tito – prilozi za biografiju*, Belgrade, 1955) (*Josip "Tito" Broz – Appendices to a Biography*)



With either rapid or slow modernisation, it wouldn't matter. And the dilemma, that of slow or incomplete modernisation, is essentially false – it was never possible to establish just one *traditional authority* in Yugoslavia, over the entire territory, without great force. So it seems that there was in fact no choice: Josip Broz came out of the war as a winner, as a hero, he had all the prerequisites to become a charismatic leader of Yugoslavia, so that is what – as Tito – he became.

Over the almost forty years of Tito's domination, Yugoslavia became a respectable country. Economically, militarily and internationally. It didn't seem that way from the inside – one can never have enough freedom, bread and circuses – but it does seem that way now, when that country is long gone.

So how were the bloody wars of the nineties possible? And all those

nationalisms, populisms... after 35 years of rapid – even if *incomplete* – modernisation? Do the items on display at the May 25 Museum entertain you or frighten you?

Those thousands of embroideries, models, socks and batons? And what do you think, how many of the people who made them would today disown their handicrafts?

How many of them, subsequently, are ashamed? How many of them would like to hide the fact that they were the ones who sent things to Tito, gave gifts, ran with batons, wrote songs and poems? How many of us took part in, encouraged and kept alive the *charismatic grounds* of Tito's domination?

In his book *Economy and Society*, Max Weber writes: *By its very nature, the existence of charismatic authority is specifically unstable. The holder may forego his charisma; he may feel 'forsaken by his God', as Jesus did on the cross; he may*

*prove to his followers that 'virtue is gone out of him'. It is then that his mission is extinguished, and hope waits and searches for a new holder of charisma. The charismatic holder is deserted by his following, (only) because pure charisma does not know any 'legitimacy' other than that flowing from personal strength, that is, one which is constantly being proved. The charismatic hero does not deduce his authority from codes and statutes, as is the case with the jurisdiction of office, nor does he deduce his authority from traditional custom or feudal vows of faith, as is the case with patrimonial power. The charismatic leader gains and maintains authority solely by proving his strength in life.*

It's a shame that Josip Broz didn't read this, sometime in the twenties of the last century, before the historic machinery of Tito was set in motion. Later, it was too late, but even later he ought to have

permitted – even initiated – a debate on the *charismatic grounds* of his own domination. He ought to have worked himself on the deconstruction of his own charisma – this could be expected of a serious man at the helm of a serious project. But no – Tito became angry whenever these issues were raised.

The word *charisma* is of Greek origin (*χάρισμα*) and means a *gift – a divine favour*. In an as yet unpublished interview on Tito, from 2007, Nebojša Popov says: *A charismatic figure appears – as Weber wrote – in times of grave crisis, even catastrophe. Then, under such circumstances, this person appears as a saviour, because he possesses extraordinary gifts – special abilities. And so, here too, in the situation which existed – in unambiguously dramatic historic circumstances, tragic, in the circumstances of not only a grave crisis but also a horrendous*

*global and civil war – a figure appeared which was given the role of saviour. And as time went by, this role was increasingly expanded.*

*In 1971, at the Korčula Summer School, Svetozar Stojanović gave a very serious presentation, a report – I myself, by coincidence, chaired this session – in which he drew attention not only to the familiar aspects of Max Weber's idea, but also to one relationship which Weber did not address. And this is that a charismatic personality – which gives legitimacy to a particular order – may also, at the same time, be a factor in the creation of a new crisis situation, a catastrophe even.*

*There is no need to elaborate any further: we have just lived through this.*

*And now, probably because of a new, grave crisis – a dramatic and tragic situation bordering on catastrophe – there is a renewal of the cult of a man with a special*

*gift who saves the people and the country. This takes the form of nostalgia – what is not being taken into account is the closed circle of charismatic legitimatisations and catastrophes – and the debate is about whether someone is nice or not, whether this catastrophe is bigger than that one, whether these figures have greater stature than those others.*

*And Svetozar Stojanović, also in an unpublished interview on Tito in 2007 says: In 1971, in Tuzla, I defended a poor wretch, a fighter who had been charged with swearing about Tito. Some girlfriend of his had reported him. There I addressed the judge and this man was acquitted by the court. Later the case also came before higher court. Tito then made his famous statement saying that "Some judges cling to the law as a drunk clings to a fence".*

*Then, on Korčula, I presented a paper on charisma and charismarchy. Later I heard*

*from the historian Ljuba Dimić, that he had acquired a copy of this paper of mine from Praksis with Tito's personal remarks and comments in the margins.*

So I too should slowly begin to close the circle, to somehow escape from this never-ending story. I could conclude that Josip "Tito" Broz was a serious man at the helm of a serious project – but he wasn't serious enough. He ought – while he was still just Josip Broz – to have known more. Even when – or precisely when – that missing knowledge came from "bourgeois" sources. For example, he ought to have learnt about Max Weber in time and ought to have taken his knowledge into account.

And later, when he had become Tito – even if modernisation could not be implemented in socialist Yugoslavia through any means other than *charismatic domination* – he ought (at least) to have shown that he was aware of the principal *grounds of*

*legitimacy* of his own domination. Had he demonstrated this awareness he would also have demonstrated that he was aware of the compelling nature of this form of domination as a necessary evil. And in that case, I believe, it would all have been different. Because Tito himself – realising that the *charismatic* type of domination is, *even when necessary, still an evil* – would have worked towards the deconstruction of his own charisma. He was, after all, a serious man. He would not have stopped it, he would not have banned it – instead he would have encouraged debate about it. And the intellectual public, at home and abroad, over the course of Tito's 35 years of rule, would likely have found a "cure" for his charisma. With the help of Tito himself. That is, a way would probably have been found to turn Tito's *charismatic domination* into *legal domination* along with resolving how to transfer the energy of charisma to

the broadest public.

However, as Todor Kuljić would say – Tito was “a skilful statesman who also made mistakes”. So he would be incensed when discussion arose on the nature of the legitimacy of his domination and did not allow debate on this. And so his charisma remained intact until his death. His political successors tried to preserve it – “After Tito, Tito” – but this did not succeed. Death showed that – as Weber wrote – *“virtue is gone out of him”: it is then that his mission is extinguished, and hope waits and searches for a new holder.*

We know how the story ends. With a *new holder*, with *new holders*. When I think about Josip Broz not having read Max Weber’s book in time, I could scream.

# On gifts and gift giving

Olga Manojlović Pintar

Is the giving of gifts a symbolic exchange of values through which a specific relationship is established between the person giving and the person receiving or, conversely, does the giving of gifts imply precisely the non-existence of reciprocity, of exchange, of two-way giving? Do the participants in the process of gift giving know that a gift can never be free of cost (Marcel Mauss), or is the phenomenon of giving gifts based on the presumption that he who gives a gift in return is actually cancelling the act as such (Jacques Derrida)? Must a gift be reciprocated, or must it be not reciprocated? The conclusion offered by Derrida presupposes that giving a gift in return is an exchange, not a giving of gifts so, in order for something to be understood as a gift, it must meet two conditions: that

the recipient does not designate it as a gift and thus will not feel obliged to either present a gift in return or be grateful, and that the giver instantly forgets it in order not to develop a feeling of expectation and, consequently, of frustration if there is no symbolic recognition, acclaim, approval or congratulations. A gift loses the character of a gift as soon as it is recognised as such by either of the two parties involved because its essence is precisely in the lack of compensation. Gifts and the presentation of gifts are impossible and unfeasible. A gift remains a gift only with the act of instant forgetting.

Regardless of the answer chosen to these questions, or the explanation accepted or not accepted, the conclusion is the same: there are two sides to the process of gift-giving. Thus thinking about presenting gifts to Josip "Tito" Broz, which was done every May in a virtually ritual way,

**means thinking not only about Tito – the recipient of the gifts – but primarily about the people and society who for a full three and a half decades preserved the practice of giving gifts to the president and who, through this, achieved their own development.**

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Presenting gifts to a ruler, as an established ritual, has always been an important element of the symbolic practice of every state community. By offering a gift, an exchange is initiated whose goal is to propitiate and win over the sovereign. Through the act of presenting gifts the power of the ruler, as an entity before whom differences were levelled and a community constituted, entered into the public space. In socialist Yugoslavia the practice of presenting gifts to Josip “Tito” Broz was one of the foundations on which social cohesion was built. Those involved in the giving of

gifts to Tito were positioned and promoted within the socialist community. For the giver, the giving of the gift meant a chance to be in the space of the White Palace and have direct contact with the president, and, above all the presumption of Tito’s gratitude as the ultimate satisfaction for the gift-giver. **In the month which bore the archetypal symbolism of spring and youth – the symbolism of renewal, growth, hope and joy (Eric J. Hobsbawm), a holiday was invented to celebrate the birthday of Josip “Tito” Broz. More than any other state holiday, May 25, later proclaimed as Youth Day, gave an illusion of the president’s direct contact with the people and the existence of a special emotional bond between them. The established practice of presenting gifts to Tito, which lasted all year round, reached its climax in the days of his birthday celebration. The precise timetable which, for weeks**

**ahead of May 25, determined the schedule and the kind of reception given to hundreds and hundreds of gift-givers, testified to the presentation of gifts as a politically and socially desirable form of behaviour. The messages which accompanied the giving of gifts expressed eternal love, devotion, trust and pride. By emphasising the attributes which earned that love and pride, the givers of gifts in fact embellished the image of the president with attributes the people of socialist Yugoslavia identified with. In the egalitarian society of socialism proclaimed at the end of World War Two, the symbol of Marshal and President Josip "Tito" Broz was loaded with the meanings which built the society. Values based on the image of a president-for-life as a ruler who clearly stands apart, a thin stratum of the social elite and a mass of equal individuals were legitimised with**

**numerous ceremonies and monuments in the public space. Recognisable by the luxury which surrounded him and which clearly set him apart, through his lifestyle of royal residences, secluded Adriatic islands and yachts, Josip "Tito" Broz became the materialisation of the future promised to every member of the socialist community. The slogan "We are all Tito", among its other meanings, certainly reflected the need for a substitution of the frustrations imposed by day-to-day life. Tito became a metaphor of the idealised life of the future but, much more than that, he was an icon of the present. Presented as one of the most prominent politicians of the Cold War era, and as the central figure of the Non-Aligned Movement, he opened for the citizens of Yugoslavia a process of moving from the margin to the centre. As the greatest traveller, a man who spoke on equal terms with world leaders in the**

**time of the Cold War, as the most valued guest around the world, Josip “Tito” Broz was the fulfilment of a Yugoslav desire for affirmation outside the borders and clear recognition. A photograph from Brioni, from July 1956, showing Tito standing in a white suit between Nehru and Nasser watching them shake hands, symbolised the central position of the “first among equals”. In the system of post-colonial states which comprised the Non-Aligned Movement, the position of Yugoslavia and the role of Josip “Tito” Broz were clearly singled out and, as such, were a powerful force in building a Yugoslav identity. Through constant travel around the country and receptions organised in connection with the May 25 celebration, an impression was created of Tito in constant communication with the people who, believing in the political and military strength of Yugoslavia, felt the need to bond as closely to him as**

**possible. The giving of gifts to Josip “Tito” Broz strengthened social cohesion and so this giving of gifts, while spontaneous at the beginning, became in time a very important element of political practice. It was practised by individuals who, through their gift – their modest handkerchief, their little child’s suit, their embroidered pillowcase, engraved box or lamp – wanted to enter an interactive relationship with the entity with whom they had identified. However by far the most numerous presenters of gifts to Tito were institutions: schools, hospitals, work organisations, sports associations, factories, mines, village cooperatives and so on. By the act of presenting gifts, work collectives and associations of citizens would affirm the authenticity of the socialist self-management ideology which was based on a network of workers’ councils as active subjects of the society. In this way a relationship was established which, through**

the presentation of artefacts in exchange for expressions of gratitude, built the system of values on which Yugoslavia functioned. Through their choice of gifts and the form of presentation, the gift givers believed they were creating an image of themselves and emphasising their own exceptional qualities in Tito's eyes. However, by ascribing to them the attributes desired, the process of gift giving changed, almost imperceptibly, its participants – both the one who received the gifts as well as those who gave them. From being a metalworker and Communist Party activist, Josip "Tito" Broz was transformed into a symbol of a statesman of international repute, while the citizens of Yugoslavia – former border guards of the most underdeveloped European empires and peasants from a tiny, marginal Balkan state - were now perceived as the champions of global peace politics. The established practice of presenting

gifts did not cease immediately with the death of Josip "Tito" Broz. It continued for some time in the form of pilgrimages and the laying of flowers and wreaths on his grave in the House of Flowers. But everything which had been transposed into the personality of Josip "Tito" Broz and, through him, into the Yugoslav community was eventually completely dispersed. What remained was frustration at the loss of the feeling of superiority the people had acquired by looking at themselves through Tito, as though through a distorting mirror. Everything which had been beyond question while the centre existed, became problematical once it disappeared. That frustration cried out for a resolution, but failed to find one, even after the bloody denouement which occurred just a decade after the death of Josip "Tito" Broz.



**Truths about Comrade Tito have been spoken and written down; they are now being written and they will be written - both in the country and abroad.**

Branko Mikulić



Fotografija druga Tita iz 1928. godine, kada je bio optužen na takozvanom »bombaškom procesu« za rad u Komunističkoj partiji. Drug Tito je pred sudom izjavio da ne priznaje buržoaski sud (lijevo). Osuđen je tada na pet godina robije, pa je kaznu djelomično izdržavao zajedno s drugom Mošom Pijade. Obojica su radila u električnoj centrali zatvora u Lepoglavi

Gift of the Živković, Tomašević and Grujić families from Osijek

**We are all**

**Tito**



Gift from the village of Klasnić

His unification with nature (the return to nature) is a return to the body. He comes back to this ... from symbolic reality into “true” (presymbolic) reality.



Unidentified gift

... handkerchiefs, tablecloths,  
cushions, pillowcases, wall hang-  
ings, socks, slippers, shoes, hats  
and similar handicrafts.



Unidentified gift





Gift of women from Kloštar Ivanić

# Batons

Olga Manojlović Pintar

Every spring from the end of World War Two until 1987, mass baton relays were held in Yugoslavia. In the 42 years of its history, the baton relay involved more than ten million citizens who ran a total of almost 900,000 kilometres. More than 22,000 imaginatively designed batons, which contained birthday congratulations and greetings to Josip “Tito” Broz, were passed from hand to hand by millions of young workers, farmers, children, students, soldiers and sportsmen. They were carried by mountaineers, divers, parachutists and even carrier pigeons. Carrying the baton through cities and villages, climbing with it to the highest mountain peaks and plunging with it into the depths of the Adriatic, the runners

nationalised the geographic space of Yugoslavia, drafting a unique mental map in which the multiple Yugoslav identities were charted. Millions of bodies in motion presented a metaphor of a dynamic society running towards the longed-for and promised future.

As the most recognisable symbol of the practice of presenting gifts to Josip “Tito” Broz, the baton shaped those systems of values on the basis of which the ideology of socialist patriotism was built. The birthday messages conveyed in the baton were incorporated into a broader context of commemorating certain anniversaries from the history of the Communist Party, the national liberation struggle and revolution, or from the period of the renewal and building of a “new” society and state. On the symbolic level, the baton gave legitimacy to the decision of the political elite to promote the central slogan of the

historic narrative of socialist Yugoslavia – the slogan of brotherhood and unity. The idea of the baton originated in 1945 in Kragujevac, a city with a long tradition of relay races. The people of Kragujevac passed a torch from hand to hand to celebrate the arrival of the first train in their city, the opening of the waterworks, and they turned out in masses to greet the Olympic Flame on its 1936 journey from Athens to Berlin. Kragujevac was also the last stop of the Torch of Freedom which, during the time of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, was carried by thousands of Sokol members from Sarajevo to Oplenac to light a devotional lamp on the grave of Petar I Karađorđević. The departure of Tito's first baton from the city whose representatives had lit a flame in the monument to the Karađorđević dynasty in Oplenac may also be interpreted as a symbolic legitimisation of the new regime.

The passing on of a baton and a book with the signatures of 15,000 young people from Šumadija into the hands of Josip "Tito" Broz in May 1945 was in fact the continuity of authority. By employing the same symbolic practice used by those who were once the fundament of monarchist Yugoslavia, the transfer of statehood was complete. **In the first years after the war the batons would be presented to Tito at the White Palace. Over the twelve year history of Tito's Baton (1945-56), many companies, schools, army units, societies and associations sent batons, each of individual design and with individual contents. From 1957, as part of the celebration of the newly-thought-up holiday, May 25 – Youth Day – Tito would receive a unique Youth Baton at a major youth rally held at the Yugoslav People's Army Stadium. Immediately after the death of Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin,**

**Yugoslav communists – the loudest critics of the cult of personality – attempted to introduce changes to the way in which Tito’s birthday was celebrated. In this sense the renaming of May 25 as Youth Day was also an attempt to affirm new political realities. The first Youth Baton was presented to Tito in 1957 by Miko Tripalo, the then secretary of the Central Committee of the People’s Youth of Yugoslavia, and the last baton was presented to Tito in 1979 by Sania Hiseni, a student from Priština.**

The journey of the baton through Yugoslavia would unite millions of citizens into a unified collective. In a period of strong affirmation of the idea of working class unity, the baton, in addition to celebrating May 1, “combined public and private merry-making and good cheer with the assertion of loyalty to the movement” (Eric J. Hobsbawm). With regular repetition

of performances in which virtually the whole society was involved, the imagined unification was realised in the public space. After the death of Josip “Tito” Broz, the baton was carried through Yugoslavia for another seven years with the slogan “After Tito, Tito”. It was in this period that the baton most clearly became identified with a petrified state whose fundamental symbols had been rendered senseless, thus losing their essential content. And so it was and remained a metaphor for Yugoslavism. From enthusiasm and pride, to shame denial and demonization, the baton closed the circle within which the Yugoslav state existed and in which, in the end, it was destroyed.



Belgrade, May 1947



Kumrovac, May 1948



Peć, March 1986



Kozara, April 1984



Zagreb, May 1948



Belgrade, May 1965



Kumrovac, May 1948

# Rallies

Olga Manojlović Pintar

*“Some people believe that sport is leisure, that it is a luxury. However this is an outdated concept. I believe that sport and the physical education of our citizens is a general national issue. I believe that at issue here is really new generations of healthy people who will, during their youth, be steeled by sport.”*

**Josip “Tito” Broz, May 25, 1957, on receiving the first Youth Baton. In the beginning, the baton presentations took place in the isolated, almost private space of Tito’s residence but, from the 1950s the presentations were moved to the public arena. With the participation of soldiers and sportsmen, Pioneers and even of preschool children from throughout Yugoslavia, the rallies**

**included complex mass choreography as part of the festive ceremony of presenting the baton to Josip “Tito” Broz.**

The rallies which were held every May 25 were preceded by major army parades on May 9 as part of the celebration of the Day of Victory over Fascism and any number of dawn ceremonies and parades celebrating May 1, International Labour Day. The whole of the month of May was devoted to celebrating the power and vitality of the community. As well as the central celebration in Belgrade, there were events held in all republic centres which supplemented the ceremonial program. The bodies of children, young men and women in gymnastic spectacles introduced into the public space the concept of collective power, the optimistic vision of the future and the interactive bonding of the citizens and the president of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. For more than twenty years (1957-79),

**in the stadium of the Yugoslav People's Army, thousands of disciplined bodies assembled themselves choreographically into slogans and symbols of unity before Tito's eyes. Docile young bodies promoted the ideas of social and national equality and loyalty to an authoritarian leader. This continued to be expressed even after his death in 1980. Over the course of thirty years, the changing images on the grassy field of the stadium were not mere visualisations of the ideological and political principles of the collective: they were also an active process of reshaping the participants, the observers in the stadium grandstands and everyone else who followed the event in front of their radio or television. From today's perspective, analysis of these mass performances reveals a clear testimony of the process of construction and deconstruction of the Yugoslav community.**

The rallies and mass public gymnastics were definitely one of the most expressive forms of the policy of disciplining the masses and creating docile bodies (Michael Foucault) typical of the whole twentieth century. Regardless of differences in political systems and their ideological underpinnings, in almost all modern states (from the liberal democracies of the West, the Nazi and Fascist regimes of Central and Southern Europe, to the socialist countries of the Eastern Bloc and the Far East), harmonious exercises created the image of the collective as a strong body paying tribute to the elevated figure of the leader. This was the way in which ideas of an organic union, as a naturally and historically determined given, were established. Appropriate exercises led by Sokol, the youth section of the Red Cross and many youth associations were also held in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia as part of state celebrations and were especially

typical of celebrations for the birthdays of Aleksandar I Karađorđević and the young Petar I Karađorđević.

The slogans attached to the post-World War Two rallies and the symbols they glorified testified unambiguously to an authoritarian political culture although, over the three decades of their existence it becomes apparent just how dynamic Yugoslav society was in the period of socialism. Times of political liberalisation produced rally performances in which the choreography was not bound to rigid lines. They created an impression of spontaneity to which inventive and modish costume designs contributed. The striving for the most unusual possible ways of handing over the batons, which were delivered to the stadium by parachutists, athletes or artists, were a striving for affirmation of new frameworks in which the socialist society would develop. On the other hand, during years of political conservatism, rigid

staging and stage design testified to an uncommunicative political system which attempted to halt changes in Yugoslavia by means of bans. This was especially clear in the years following the death of Josip "Tito" Broz when, with a system of bans and punishments culminating in adoption of the Law on Protecting the Name and Persona of Josip "Tito" Broz in 1984, the political elite attempted to set society in concrete. The stage design of one of the last rallies was an attempt to endorse a political culture based on the dogmatic glorification of the personality of Josip "Tito" Broz. The extent to which the symbolism of these performance reflected political reality is demonstrated most clearly in the title of the last rally held in the stadium of the Yugoslav People's Army. It was "Turn on the Light", and it appears to have heralded the dark events which followed just four years later.



Yugoslav People's Army Stadium, May 1962



Yugoslav People's Army Stadium, May 1963



Yugoslav People's Army Stadium, May 1961



Yugoslav People's Army Stadium, May 1958



Yugoslav People's Army Stadium, May 1978



Yugoslav People's Army Stadium, May 1973



Yugoslav People's Army Stadium, May 1986

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