



Milosevic: Portrait of a Tyrant

Dusko Doder, Louise Branson

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Who is Slobodan Milosevic?

Is he the next Saddam Hussein, the leader of a renegade nation who will continue to torment the United States for years to come? Or is he the next Moammar Qaddafi, an international outcast silenced for good by a resolute American bombing campaign?

The war in Kosovo in the spring of 1999 introduced many Americans to the man the newspapers have called "the butcher of the Balkans," but few understand the crucial role he has played and continues to play in the most troubled part of Europe. Directly or indirectly, Milosevic has waged war and instigated brutal ethnic cleansing in Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, and he was indicted for war crimes in May 1999. Milosevic's rise to power, from lowly Serbian apparatchik to president of Yugoslavia, is a tale of intrigue, cynical manipulation, and deceit whose full dimensions have never been presented to the American public.

In this first full-length biography of the Yugoslav leader, veteran foreign correspondents Dusko Doder and Louise Branson paint a disturbing portrait of a cunning politician who has not shied from fomenting wars and double-crossing enemies and allies alike in his ruthless pursuit of power. Whereas most dictators encourage a cult of personality around themselves, Milosevic has been content to operate in the shadows, shunning publicity and allowing others to grab the limelight -- and then to take the heat when things go badly. Milosevic's secretive style, the authors show, emerged in response to a family history of depression (both of his parents committed suicide) and has served him well as he begins his second decade in power.

Doder and Branson introduce us to the key figures behind Milosevic's rise: his wife, Mirjana Markovic, who is often described (with justification) as a Serbian Lady Macbeth, and the Balkan and American politicians who learned, too late, about the costs of underestimating Milosevic. They also reveal how the United States refused to take the necessary action in 1992 to remove Milosevic from power without bloodshed -- not realizing that he uses such moments of weakness as opportunities to lull his opponents into traps, thereby paving the way for a new consolidation of power. Now, in the wake of the victory in Kosovo, it remains to be seen whether America will learn this lesson or whether we will allow this deeply troubled man to continue to pose a threat to European peace and security as the twenty-first century dawns.

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