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# Dragoš Kalajić – A Serbian critical attitude towards western culture and civilization

**Abstract:** Through the presentation of Dragoš Kalajić's journalistic texts with the subject of war, as well as by emphasizing Kalajić's participation in war conflicts during 1992-1995, the author strives to point to the basic corpus of values by which Kalajić was guided in life and which he fiercely defended, as well as to the higher, literary quality of his war reports. Analyzing Kalajić's understanding of war and the place allotted to the writer in war, the author gives a clear picture of Kalajić's "ideal" war correspondent, "the writer of God Mars". He dedicates special attention to Kalajić's observations regarding the character and spiritual strength of the fighters, who are the main bearers of the values about which he leaves a trace. In the conclusion, the author also gives a personal evaluation of Kalajić's war records, as well as of the character of the war correspondent/writer standing behind them.

**Keywords:** Dragoš Kalajić, war, Saint-Exupéry, Krajina, aristocracy

Dragoš Kalajić (1943–2005) was not a leftist – there is absolutely no doubt about it because he never resolved the question of social justice and respect for human personality in an ideal world of the equal ones, which in practice always turned into dictatorships, totalitarianism and destruction, first of the identities of nations, and then of nations themselves. However, Dragoš Kalajić, the man I knew and went with on several occasions to the

warfront in the Republic of Serbian Krajina, was a practitioner. Some would say that it is the point of his potential encounter with the ideological enemy that was, just all enemies of the Serbian people, the East and Eurasia, perceived by Dragoš only as an external manifestation, incarnation of the "invisible" enemy, as perfectly described by Nicodemus the Hagiorite.

Therefore, Kalajić was a practitioner. He did not write for the sake of writing, nor was he carried

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away by the need to show the wealth of his knowledge and writing talent which were indisputable. Everything he wrote, according to him, was supposed to have its practical application, to show the possibility of a different opinion, life and, eventually, work, not closed in the isolated balloons, but vividly connected to the problems with which his people had to encounter in history that took place here and now. Everything he wrote, as testified by Kalajić, stemmed from practice: from historical “truths” which we witness with our deceptive eyesight, and the Truth which is felt by spirit and soul, the truth that is sensed and perceived only after the rejection of the assumption that the material contact with the world is the only one, the truth that under the name of “tradition” hides deep behind the unwinding of the tape.

Dragoš's effort, on the one hand, to find practice for his work and to return it to practice and, on the other hand, still to distance from it as from something essentially deceptive, like sand on sunny beaches, among the grains of which only occasionally a pearl shines, had, as once it was also noted by Miša Đurković, deep implications “to specific questions from the field of politics, international relations and popular culture” (Kalajić, 2024a, p. 11).

While respecting Dragoš himself and before speaking of his holy characters from the wartime days, of heroes and those who are not heroes, whom he encountered on the front line, and who will become alive before all those of you who reach the last page of this book, it is exactly the place where we should explain the way in which Dragoš comprehended the struggle in which the Serbs found themselves in the 1990s. It should be determined what they fought for and, eventually, what Dragoš

concludes as a thinker or as a war correspondent/ writer about the war as a *denouement* (never final) of the drama of modern humanity, caused by a false thesis about the end of history,

## Tradition and practical solutions the Serbs fight against

Kalajić's understanding of war and its place in history cannot be comprehended unless we take into account his understanding of Europe, which has not only been “betrayed”, but, despite the disintegration it has been subjected to and which is governed in line with the colonizers' needs, embodied in the masters, “the Anglo-American establishment and secret societies”, and servants, embodied in the “European community”, is at the same the “the empire of the future” (Kalajić, 2024, p. 11). Just as the idea of Europe is not only dissolution at the same time and the creation of something new that usually comes after every decay, death and disintegration, for Kalajić, war is not just destruction, but also a moment when the new emerges, radically different from the old that disappears.

Reducing history to the material, physically tangible and observable is, according to Kalajić, the biggest trap. It is imposed, like “truth”, by those structures that, aware of the correctness of sharp observation, have only one goal – to maintain the world in the current state by permanently expanding their own system of soft power (Kalajić, 2024, p. 17). That is why Kalajić, as someone coming from the culture which is, whether it likes it or not, guided by the spiritual force that cannot be controlled (but one may try to be in its vicinity, which is the

sole guarantee of survival and victory), once again stands on the front of defending “the occupied territory”. In the West, where he resides, he tries to find those strongholds that would not strengthen his personal fort (because, eventually, it is not necessary at all), but that would, on the one hand. Prove to the Westerners that they can find in their own culture what the Serbs do, while the Serbs would have some more evidence that in their struggle, so irrationally led (in Njegoš’s words, “despising human nothingness and the weaving of a mindless assembly”) they are still followed (and lagging behind them) by somewhat more rational and colder Westerners, those who have been deprived of the greatness of Kosovo and Lazar’s commitment to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Dragoš (also) found his teachers in those Western authors who resisted the communist banalization of reality. For his time and his generation, perhaps it was not widespread, but not too odd either. However, what was “odd” and what, to this day, has remained the subject of the dispute with Kalajić by local citizens, is the fact that he takes a step further, relating to “the persecuted, exorcised, marginalized and unwanted ones”, who were pushed to the margin of their own communities because of criticizing the “consumption” ideology, so developed in the West (Kalajić, 2024, p. 13). They were “guilty” only of understanding that there was no essential difference between communism and capitalism. Both worldviews, profoundly materialistic, with no deeper understanding of history, are characterized by “modern

nihilism and the demon of economy, which are, however, presented by the Western civilization as the world of progress, liberation and fulfilment” (Kalajić, 2024, p. 14).

Nevertheless, Kalajić does not mind such “apostasy”. In his specific loneliness, “forsakenness”, in that almost monastic withdrawal from the world resulting in retreat to the desert and hermitage, from which one can only come out and go to war, he recognizes not only the struggle which, deeply aware of the Truth, he wages within his people, but also the struggle which he, finally, leads against his enemies, at the same time the enemies of Eurasia and his nation. In the world dominated by the “enlightenment model”, it is desirable and only proper to be “decadent”, despised, conservative and rejected (Kalajić, 2024, p. 14). Staying “alone” and deeply understanding the “forsakenness” of his people in the days when masks were taken off and the new-old Director of the humanity drama stepped onto the stage, Kalajić wrote his column “One View of the World” in *Duga*, so impatiently awaited by us, his acquaintances, disciples, admirers and friends. A large number of people from the generation to which I belong admired Dragoš’s aristocratic, almost Mahy-like attitude<sup>[2]</sup> towards the world which did not understand what he spoke about and in what circumstances the Serbs and Eurasia found themselves. We asked for it and Dragoš offered us the image of the world that was “radically different from the established reality, marked by economism and progress, and man entrapped by those frameworks” (Kalajić, 2024, p. 81).

[2] As a reminder, Thomas de Mahy, Marquis de Favras (1744–1790), while reading the verdict that would take him to death, told the revolutionaries calmly and with contempt that there were three words were misspelled in the text.

Quite graphically and without the element that leads sound philosophy to meaningless philosophizing, in his columns and texts Kalajić told us that the main opponent of Europe had been and still was Atlanticism, which he “identified with Judeo-Protestantism” (Kalajić, 2024, p. 38).

This opponent, whose roots lie in the demonic worship of economy – as concluded by Kalajić looking at the ideological models of the opponent, the practical predecessors, as well as the experience of his own and other nations in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – is reluctant to leave anyone free. Atlanticism essentially has no ally; it does not need friends but slaves (here, we should also take into account Marx’s idea that capital has no friends and that its only aim is consolidation, to the full monopoly or destruction of the world). If they do not accept their gradual extinction, completely aestheticized by the idea of “victory”, “progress” and “freedom”, those slaves will be condemned to brutal, television death, like death seen in martyr Syria, which was not so unbearably banal only to humiliate the victim (we can wonder whether it is done at all), but to frighten everyone daring to wake up from the coma in which they were entrapped (Kalajić, 2024, p. 139).

To us, who saw so many banal deaths in the 1990s, Dragoš proved that they, unlike the death from Baljak’s cult documentary, were not worthless after all. Aware of the significance of his each and every word, Kalajić points out to us that deaths on the front have an incomparably deeper and higher meaning than the liquidation of Knele which was carried out in a Belgrade hotel and represents the only future for Saint Sava’s soul if it allows itself to be demonized with money.

Unlike the satanic liquidations on the streets of Belgrade, death on the front, according to Kalajić, was an expression of contempt towards the demon of economy, to which the Serbs were largely immune, thanks to their Orthodoxy (and regardless of their personal will). As part of the territory that is different from the “Weberian-Protestant” in its position towards the materialistic, the Serbs waged the war for the salvation of humanity, as Kalajić wrote proudly. In that conflict, they did not defend (only) themselves, but, as a specific outpost of Russia, the main target of the demonic West – they also bought time for the Russian rise, being a catechumen together with sleeping Moscow. That is why, in Kalajić’s opinion, the war was not waged only for the villages in Podrinje, Semberija, Banija, Kordun, Lika, Slavonia and Dalmatia. From this time distance, I can say (precisely thanks to Kalajić) that it was and remained an expression of the geopolitical and civilizational opposition, which still has to see its great resolution (Kalajić, 2024, p. 38).

Teaching us about the true nature of the war being waged in front of us, in which many of us participated (directly or indirectly), gazing at the “revolution”, brought about no longer by the hippie movement, but by the countercultural (so we thought) British and American punk, Kalajić told us that there was nothing authentic in alcohol and the acting out of a revolution. Not really taking care of our reaction, Kalajić said that London, New York and Washington, which we had admired and then waged war against, were not magnificent capitals of humanity or a nest from which the profound transformation of the world would arise, abut the centres in which (although enslaved as well) golden shackles were made for keeping free nations in subordination.

“Powerful” capitals of the West are nothing but ordinary “laboratories” of the new world order, and those Serbian enemies standing in the field are only its guinea pigs (Kalajić, 2005, p. 6). Kalajić finds nothing strange in this fact, which also reveals the tragedy of our enemies that, whether they like it or not, suffer with us. In his opinion, such a role actually belongs to Zagreb and the Serbian enemies trusting Zagreb; its root is at a much deeper, meta-historical level. The Western, Roman Catholic world has annulled Christ’s denial and as the only space in which it seeks to prove its orthodoxy, such as “Judeo-protestants”, it accepts the material world, the world dominated by the demon of economy and factual political power.

The fact that they belong to a Church that the West has not co-opted (unlike the Protestant Church) and has not corrupted (unlike the Catholic Church), the Serbs, as bluntly pointed out by Dragoš, stayed outside the declining world and happen to be its problem, even a larger one than the actual rotting of the West. Just as, driven by their demonized nature, the Catholicized Serbs from Herzegovina were the first to resort to killing to nullify the evidence of their own fall, the collective West immersed in materialism and nihilism started the war against Eurasia as the space in which the demon of economy is considered a foreign body (which does not mean that it has not managed to penetrate it as well).

In that war, whose actors were also the Serbs, two worldviews clashed: one was an expression of Luciferian pride and the thesis that man is the measure of things, and the other was based on the idea that human rights can only be truly satisfied after divine rights are placed above them. According

to Kalajić, introducing hierarchy is not submission, but the only path to freedom. The Eastern man does not define the concept of freedom as a mere fulfilment of the narcissistic need to bring our own satisfaction to the end, self-proclaimed as the measure of all things, but as the discovery of salvation. (To make matters worse, such narcissistic fulfilment is not possible at all, since capitalism constantly fabricates new “needs” without which it “is not possible” to be satisfied.)

Kalajić did not wake us up from the coma in which we slept in a motherly, quiet way, so as not to scare us. He did not try to make easier our encounter with the world whose logic is opposite to the one in which we fall but never reach the bottom, in which we hit the pavement without falling apart. He did it in a manly, soldierly way, not caring about the shock we might experience. He told us that, despite historical experience, which in my generation was additionally strengthened by films about partisans and, despite the current state of affairs, compounded by the sad Croatian “Danke Deutschland”, the Serbs could and had to search for a model of cooperation with united Germany. He wanted to believe that Germany would, sooner or later, “emancipate itself from American occupation” (Kalajić, 2024, p. 18). It seems that only now, despite the official establishment’s efforts to suppress them and declare them “extreme”, we can hear the first emancipatory voices from Berlin.

Slapping us for the sake of sobering, Dragoš wrote mercilessly about the role of American bankers in the overthrow of the Russian Empire and the contribution of the Serbian assassins in Sarajevo in 1914 to the world preparation for the collapse of

civilization initiated in 1917 (Kalajić, 2024, p. 127). The consequences were also felt in the Yugoslav bloody drama, of which we were witnesses and participants.

Yet, we should not be deceived! Kalajić did not regret the disappearance of Yugoslavia. In his understanding of the tragedy of the fratricidal war<sup>[3]</sup> (which we at times find completely incomprehensible and unacceptable) and in the revelation of the need of the Atlanticist circles for such wars. Dragoš was consistent in his belief that the state of the South Slavs was conceived as an extended arm of Western freemasonry and that it had to disappear. (Kalajić, 2024, p. 124). A new form of community was to be created in that space, with a completely changed internal character ("Slavic civilization" and the idea of "Slavic capitalism", with the village and the cooperative in its very centre, which would have sufficient strength to resist the "civilizing" missions of the West), which would logically be oriented towards Russia (Kalajić, 2024, p. 217). Likewise, Dragoš hoped for the birth of a new Russia, which, he assured, should break with its anti-Germanism and, despite circumstances that were not conducive to it, turn towards Berlin.

In the end, the struggle waged by the Serbs, according to Kalajić, had its own "earthly" dimension (hence the necessity of the manly awakening from sleep). It was and it is still the struggle for Serbian geopolitics. Milomir Stepić is perfectly right when stating that Kalajić was one of the "most deserving figures" for the renaissance of Serbian geopolitics (Kalajić, 2024, p. 31).

Posing the Serbian question as a geopolitical one, Kalajić actually put forward a thesis about the possibility of the existence of integralist Serbian nationalism, which did not depend on the changeable state of affairs in the field and did not fragment the fatherland, even when, three decades after the expulsion from Krajina, the Serbs no longer live in the territories from which, during wartime years, Kalajić invited for the continuation of the struggle (Kalajić, 2024, pp. 43-44).

Today, when in the part of the Serbian ethnic territory cultural policy has become, if not the only, then the main tool we can use, this idea of Dragoš's is once again becoming contemporary. Where it is possible to wage a political struggle, we are obliged, if we follow what Dragoš Kalajić left us, to wage it. Without fear or hesitation. Always aware that the wars we are in are not wars for space, but for tradition, which stands outside the space we are in and the time we are from.

## The writer of God Mars

Kalajić believes that war is not only destruction, but also a radical position, a point at which the creation of the new. However, in Kalajić's opinion, war is not a God-given fact, but an expression of humanity's tragic inability to understand the essence of its own existence. That is why war assumes its true value only if, after it, man properly defines his position towards salvation, as the essence of history. To Kalajić, war is not "world

[3] We should not forget that Kalajić was trying to establish healthy relations with the Croats, believing that every anesthetized nation has the possibility of awakening from the forced sleep.

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Dragoš Kalajić was also a painter as well as an author. The displayed painting is titled Modification 4 and was created

using acrylic on canvas.

Photo: National Museum of Serbia

hygiene" either. In fact, the idea of the war as "purification" is complete "nonsense" in his opinion, since war always, "particularly in the age of modern technology", "affects and takes away the best ones, depriving the warring nations of enormous genetic wealth".

Just as he does not belong to the category of those "heroes" who rejoice in war, Kalajić is not among those who lament and proclaim it a phenomenon immanent to the fallen human character. Just as he does not need to fit into the theories of the "noble savage" and to make man into "a good being", Kalajić does not need to deny the inclination of the human nature towards violence and killing. The value determination has nothing in common with the recognition of facts, whereas war is exactly that: "an eternal constant of human history" which cannot be "stopped even by the greatest mobilization of pacifist wishes".

However, since it gives the opportunity to humanity to properly perceive its own tragedy and devise a new path towards a different, invincible goal, war, according to Kalajić, is "a positive selection". Citing Béla Hamvas, Kalajić clearly emphasizes that war brings a much-needed spiritual barrier that divides people into "two types, the ones who remain the prisoners of primal fear", and "those who have freed themselves from it". Moreover, this "fear" is not (only) the fear of death, but primarily the fear of life, or rather of a life different from the one that brought the individual and the collective to the current state. Therefore, as Kalajić writes, faced with his personal experience and that of those with whom he was on the front, it is only on the front line, after being freed from all delusions and lies, that

people begin to live an authentic life. By "authentic", Kalajić denotes a life without algorithms, a life that "does not give away knowledge", but rather a life one must fight for. War is just such an opportunity, which only those with a deeper sense of life can use to their advantage.

On the front, that "deeper sense", in Kalajić's opinion, begins at the moment when the hero, the warrior, rises above the banality of fear. Hence the story about war is, in Kalajić's opinion, also a story about humanity and heroism, the testimony about enthusiasm, in the same way as Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the war narrator and hero perhaps most admired by Kalajić, created *Little Prince*. It is not war that reduces man to the lowest level, but man does this to himself in war. War, just as any other essentially unfavourable situation in which the individual and whole collectives may find themselves, gives the possibility of rising and proving one's own, personal spiritual strength. In the end, banality is transcended through war.

Pointing exactly to the example of Saint-Exupéry, in his work "Writers of God Mars" Kalajić depicts the character of the hero-narrator, the son of war. The author of *Little Prince* was not a false pacifist, as usually pointed out by those who do not understand the essence of war; he did not pose superfluous questions to himself, he did not wonder whether "he should" or "for whom", but heroically rising above the banality of destruction and false peace, which is nothing but the treason of the attacked fatherland, he fulfilled the duty imposed by love. The critical experience of the world, which is not disputable in Saint-Exupéry, according to Kalajić, was not the reason for this writer and war

pilot to stay outside the whirlwinds of war.<sup>[4]</sup> Namely, after the collapse of France in the short-lasting war against Germany, Saint-Exupéry was one of those who suffered in the forced neutrality, resisting any false pacifism, refusing to have the love for the nearest replaced by self-indulgence, whose ultimate outcomes are desertion and betrayal. As soon as he had the opportunity for it after the occupation of North Africa, he once again got into his airplane and flew to his fatherland just as a war pilot and a hero should do.

Kalajić is honest not only towards the war and its heroes, but also towards those who speak and write about the war, while staying far from the front line and from understanding its essence. One who did not participate in the war has no right to speak about it, Kalajić told both to “our people” who, at least during the 1990s, loudly called for fighting although they were far away from guns and canon. In Dragoš’s opinion, a war correspondent who wants to become a war writer and author, is the only one with spiritual strength to see through the banal material nature of war, and must himself be a spiritual person. Otherwise, he will relate to human weaknesses and pathos, as “mediocre Hemingway” did, understanding war solely as death that does not destroy only the fighter’s physical existence, but also the spiritual, metaphysical character of the fighter’s heroism. That is why Kalajić emphasizes the following as the ones in the search for the best “writers of

God Mars”: Xenophon, Homer, Apollinaire, Evola, de Montherlant, Céline, *von Salomon*, Gumilyov, Heidegger, de Chardin, Hamvas, Saint-Exupéry, Jünger, Malaparte, Crnjanski and Krakov.

It is only those who were not on the front, according to Kalajić, cannot recognize heroism of the enemy. It is only those who are not driven by love in their action and who do not find the need in love to overcome the banality of the world can be limited to hatred and dehumanization of their opponents. That is why Kalajić, deeply aware of who he is, what he is and from whom he defends sanctity, despise dissemination of hatred “against the enemy on the other side of the line of fire”.

In his speeches and texts, he expressed his opposition to those who, during the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, called for the complete extermination of entire nations. In his “war reports and testimonies of great writers”, Dragoš wrote strictly observing that model, “it is not possible to find any calls to kill enemies. The first historical, or rather the most ancient, witness to such an ethical rule is Homer: although he certainly fought in the ranks of the Achaeans, in the Iliad he also sang of the exploits of the Trojan heroes with worthy respect, even admiration”.

Those who do not recognize the heroism of their enemies (and we are aware that we, the Serbs, have also come to a state in which it is disputable whether we have the strength to see our enemy not only

[4] Today, when the opposition, referring to the authorities, tells us to take the opposition attitude towards the defence of our country, we should remember an example from our history – Dimitrije Tucović. Although he criticized the politics of Nikola Pašić and Stojan Protić, in his last letter to his father, directly from the front, Tucović wrote that his whole life he had shared the destiny of his people and that he was doing it in 1914 as well.

as an opponent, but also as a hero) are not heroes themselves, nor are they “the writers of God Mars”.

“As war history testifies, warmongering calls and murderous incitements were written only by bad or mediocre writers, as a rule from a distant, safe or comfortable background.”

Calls for killing and contempt for everything done by the enemy is, in Kalajić’s opinion, part of propaganda. It is not love or self-sacrifice, but an expression of mere efforts “to artificially compensate for the lack of solid motivations for struggle”. Hatred, as Dragoš Kalajić told us at the height of the worst conflicts in the Republic of Serbian Krajina and Republic Srpska, is a reflection of the spiritually weak and a direction for turning to the road that ends in defeat and total disaster.

“One of the most difficult tasks of the fighter is when – due to disbelief or doubt ion the soundness of the state he should defeat” – he cannot find any motivation for further effort. The strength for such effort, which the state (with its, most frequently, banally materialist interest) attempts to encourage by equally banal propaganda, must be found by the true hero “in himself, in his mind, in his soul”. There, Kalajić finds his absolute model in Saint-Exupéry who, in a letter of 30<sup>th</sup> July 1944, written only one day before his last journey, treats with contempt the warmongers in his own ranks and the angels of banal death: “I am not touched by forcing to hatred, the carelessness and abominations they call *rising*... Under the dangers of war, I am naked and barer than it seems possible. Absolutely pure. The other day, I was surprised by the fighter planes. I barely escaped them. I felt completely blissful at that moment. It is not that I no longer feel (dangers9 due to some sporting or war delirium, but I no longer understand

anything but the quality of the essence. Virtue – it is to save the French spiritual legacy kept in the Carpentras Library. It is wandering in a plane, bare. It is teaching children to read. It is accepting to be killed as an ordinary carpenter. They are the fatherland... Not me: I come from the fatherland. Poor fatherland.”

It is only the consciousness raised high like this, called “aristocratic” by Dragoš, defying the deeply rooted notions immersed in mere economic power, gained or inherited, that can find strongholds of its own and national spirit in war. Such rise, achieved mostly when, due to being close to death, man frees himself from “any slightly more important influence of the soul’s fear for own life”, will be observed by Dragoš in the Republic of Serbian Krajina. Its fighters wrote a message on one of their tanks: *Death doesn’t hurt*. In that Lazar-like and St. Vitus message he did not see a call for death, but for heroism, a call for the absence of any fear for personal physical existence.

When speaking about the bad consequences of war, Kalajić tries to distance himself from the banality of death and destruction, which, being so obvious, did not require any special elaboration. That is why he does not have much respect for those who, after wars, neglect their “chivalrous ethics” and put images of horror in the foreground. Instead, once again outlining the essence of that ethic before our eyes, Kalajić seeks to show whether the war we went through brought about the necessary change. He highlights the positioning towards that fact of those who, surpassing the banality of physical death, succeeded in reaching the “aristocratic”, St. Vitus and Exupérian consciousness.

Kalajić does not lack honesty here either. Observing the experience of his own people, he clearly

observes that the inability of true heroes to get used to a state of “peace” is not a psychological disorder, but an expression of nostalgia for the “experienced greatness of man” in war, the greatness that disappears in peace, that is of no value in peace, and that the hero wants to pass on to younger generations. It seems that this gap was also described by Stevan Jakovljević in his book *Change of Generations*. This gap was also mentioned by General Ljubomir Maksimović, Commander of the Fifth Regiment of the Drina Division, liberator of Srem and Sušak, in his speech to the people of Mitrovica in Srem in 1940. That gap, the permanent image of the inability to understand the ethical strength of war as a source of spiritual strength, is certainly an important segment of what, in the interwar Serbian and Yugoslav political history, might be classified as a conflict of “the old” and “the new”, or, as noted by Kalajić, those whose ideals are, on the one hand, “aristocracy”, and, on the other – “pantry”.

That conflict, as correctly observed by Kalajić, is not dominated by those who, due to their age, could not take part in the war (and, therefore, have the right to speak about it with the lack of understanding), but those who avoided “the military service or the moral obligation to wear the uniform”. They are the ones who (according to Kalajić, those who have no right whatsoever to speak about war) “harbour a barely concealed or open hostility towards war returnees. Envy and hatred harboured by the self-proclaimed intellectuals from such citizen ranks towards thinkers and writers who bravely responded to war calls have already become proverbial”.

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that soldiers and writers/warriors cannot find their bearings in the post-war “peace”, but often despise it as the state

supporting Dragoš’s thesis from the beginning of this text: that war is no “hygiene” and the only victors in it are often (both on the side of the formal victors and the formally defeated ones) those who do not give up the banal understanding of life, in the centre of which there is demonic worship of economy.

“As testified by the works of great writers-warriors, from Drieu La Rochelle, via Ernst Jünger and Curzio Malaparte to Miloš Crnjanski” – Kalajić writes – “the worldview shaped and raised by the fires of war sees through and permanently despises civilian society and the pertaining order of values, in which it sees only the rule of perversity and lowliness, feebleness and cowardice”.

Speaking, finally, not only about those he looked up to, those he met in the trenches and mountains throughout Republic Srpska and the Republic of Serbian Krajina, but also about himself, Kalajić will tell both his opponents and his would-be friends that people who went through war are fully entitled to treat the civilian world “with the voice of proud superiority”. That voice is actually an expression of “aristocratic” contempt for the fear for own physical existence and Lazar-like/Exupérien calmness at the moment of the last flight, which is no longer the flight towards the enemy and death, but towards the sun and salvation.

## Bright characters from wartime days

Practical and devoted to tradition, Dragoš Kalajić does not feel the need to merely describe the front and the people on the front. On the contrary, in his war testimonies, which we read with the equal

fervour as comics, Kalajić searches for “signs, personalities and ideas” showing to the Truth, concealed deep outside the banality of the matter (Kalajić, 2005, p. 5). In that respect, I can freely say that he was not overburdened by the course of history and the war within it, the part of which he became. In his texts, Kalajić appears not as a mere chronicler, but primarily as a writer, the one striving to penetrate as long and deeply as possible into the corridors of history, in its strongholds, with a clear intention of discovering the essence of being and to invite the main course to subordinate to the goal, testifying that there is no sense or reason to resist it.

Searching for a reflection of tradition among the fighters on the front, and trying to kindle the same flame within himself, Kalajić is present in his stories. That is exactly where their greatest value lies, that is how they stand out among empty newspaper reports, from which it is clear that the author is nothing more than a recorder at a meeting of a local party committee or an organization of associated labour.

Kalajić's literary war records are not a mere listing of someone's life path, but points of encounters of the hero and the writer not only with war companions on the front, but also with himself. Primarily with himself. Namely, in his search for deep roots of history on the front, without the burden of having to “fit in” with what was labelled as “life” by the Belgrade establishment (and on a larger scale), trying to understand the elements that make man think and behave in a certain manner, Kalajić presents his own Self to his fellow fighters and the public. Perhaps even more precisely, Kalajić, having evidently found his own starting points much earlier than the majority of the Serbs, clearly needs to

show them to others, in line with his practical, yet not unthinking nature. He does not do it proudly, by imposing himself as some kind of teacher, but by recognizing these starting points in the true heroes of his time, in those who, with guns in their hands and on the front lines, were the guardians of the sacred in a time of complete collapse of the profane. in the Serbian ethnic territory.

Therefore, Kalajić does not hide between his lines. He does not want to be “objective”, which usually means mild. He knows what he wants; he knows where he is going and has no difficulty in clearly emphasizing it. He does it not only as a member of the Serbian people, whose aim is to justify everywhere everything good and bad done by his compatriots, but primarily as an artist, a painter, an essayist who also finds room for criticizing his war companions, in the same way as Eduard Limonov did in the hills surrounding Sarajevo. Is there anything more natural than when the writers such as Lidočka and Radovan Karadžić stand together in front of collapsing Europe? Is there anything more difficult than the fact that exactly the counter of the people who had both warned about the “highway of hell and suffering” and saw clear contours of the potential future in the dark, which was sung about by tragic Natalija Medvedeva, poisoned by the same dark and the same rot? “Tragedy and experience teach us”, Kalajić wrote, “that all phenomena, always and everywhere, express their formative and informative principles most clearly and most convincingly in their very starting points, in the centres of creation” (Kalajić, 2005, p. 6).

On 20<sup>th</sup> June 1992, at the very beginning of the war, on the ruins of Yugoslavia, Kalajić wrote in *Duga*, completely directly, that the world was

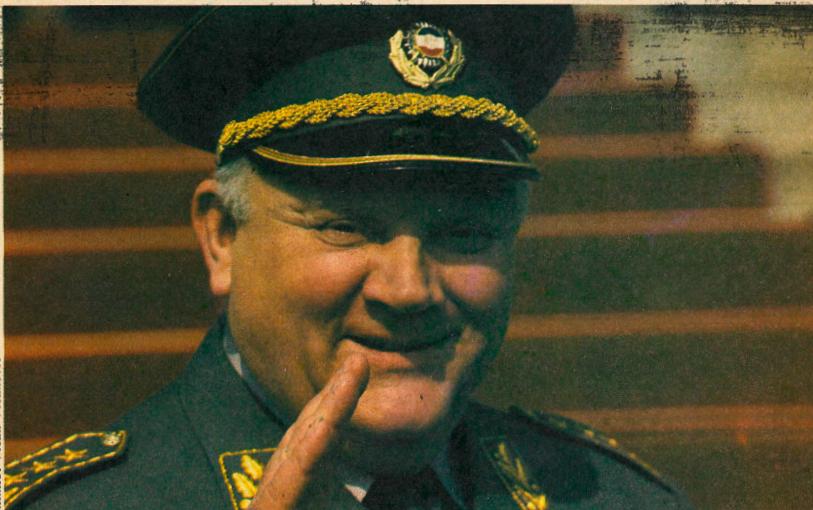
Nebojša R. Kuzmanović

Dragoš Kalajić - A Serbian critical attitude towards western culture and civilization

DUGA

U RAZGOVORU SA ... IDE NAJDALJE

## KOMANDANT ODBRANE JUGOSLAVIJE: GENERAL ŽIVOTA PANIĆ



Snimio: Vlčan Vicanović

Da li je politika isuviše ozbiljna stvar za političare: Pitanje za generala Panića

# VOJNA SPREMNOST TVORI MIR

Kakvi su kapitali saznanja stekni kroz tragična iskustva naše armije? Kako se odbraniti od budućih grešaka ili izdaju politike? Kakvi su izgledi (puste) turske želje za hegemonijom „od Kineskog zida do Jadrana“? Da li su zagovornici vojne intervencije protiv Jugoslavije svesni mogućnosti vojske za „uvršteni udar“? Da li je celishodno stvaranje vojno-ekonomskih kompleksa u kritičnim zonama naše zemlje, po uzoru na rimsку, izraelsku i našu, krajnjišnici tradiciju. U razgovoru sa Dragošem Kalajićem, načelnikom Generalštabe VJ, general Života Panić je otvoreno odgovorio na sva pitanja.

KALAJIĆ: Gospodine generale, pošto ste, odlukom Predsedništva, došli na čelo armije u sudobosnom trenutku za našu zemlju, preuzeли ste smelo i teret teških posledica niza prethodnih grešaka, slabo-

sti i izdaja. Kakva se saznanja i pouke za budućnost mogu izvući iz svih tih tragičnih iskustava? S obzirom da je politički vrh prethodne Jugoslavije bio najodgovorniji za tragediju o kojoj je ovde reč — šta bi,

po Vama, valjalo učiniti da se integritet i sposobnost Vojske ubuduće sačuvaju od eventualnih pogubnih procena i odluka političkog vrha nove Jugoslavije?

General PANIĆ: Na početku ovog razgovora želim istaći da su, na žalost, opsta saznanja i konkretne pouke koje se mogu izvući iz tragičnih iskustava kroz koje je u ovom ratu JNA prošla bolna i neprljatna, ali i otrežnjavajuća i veoma dragocena.

U ovim teškim međunarodnim i unutaržavnim nedlacima u kojima se SR Jugoslavija našla, našoj transformisanoj vojsci predstoji mnogo toga što se mora što pre i na najpogodniji način učiniti na čisto profesionalnom planu. U svemu tome, borbeno gotovost jedinica i komandi, spremnost i sposobnost svakog starešine i vojnika u obrani otadžbine, kao i rešenost da zemlja po svaku cenu obrani, ukoliko to prilike budu zahtevale, jeste najviši kriterijum našeg daljeg života i rada.

To podrazumeva uspostavljanje adekvatnog odnosa između visoke državne politike i vojne strategije, jer je u istoriji ratovanja, klasičnim vojnim teorijama i doktrinama, pa i u savremenim strategijskim konceptima većine zemalja, precizno



Part of an article by Dragoš Kalajić in the newspaper Duga.

Photo: private archive

in the third world war which was actually just a continuation what had begun back in 1914. The Serbs, for their own reasons, the justification of which he does not doubt, were drawn into other people's interests and participated to a significant extent in the war. "This war is waged by the powers of 'Atlanticism' for the sake of imposing the 'new world order' and reducing man to the slave sacks of an economic animal"; it is a mechanism by which the "plutocratic International", after the Great War moved to America, strives to achieve its "pseudo-imperialist interests". The peak of these interests is to gain control of the Eurasian continent, "where the mind and the heart of the world reside, seen in the light of meta-geographic symbolism" (Kalajić, 2024, p. 124).

The war against the Serbs, waged by Jovo from Lika, Dragan from Ozren, Milorad from Dalmatia and Nikola from Srem, forever sleeping on the Podrinje elevations, as Kalajić said and wrote in *Duga*, had only one goal – to fragment the Serbian territory on the largest possible scale, to break up the Serbs, reduce their number and thus prevent any future resistance which would, as he believed, sooner or later come from Russia. In a way, we may freely say today that Kalajić was right. The fact that Russian resistance did not take the form of a national and conservative uprising within Russia itself, and against its own traitorous pseudo-elites, as he predicted or wished, costs Russians much more today than Kalajić's ability to predict it (Kalajić, 2024, p. 139). However, in quite an unusual manner, Kalajić was also right in that respect, having stated that the delay would cost the Russians not only Moscow, but also Belgrade and, consequently, the entire Balkans. In fact, it would cost the pan-Slavic space which

was seen by Kalajić, until his last breath, despite everything happening in that space, as a (desirable) political whole.

He wrote about it as early as 1992 in the text "Towards the Slavic Empire", in which, *inter alia*, he stated: "The Slavic nations (including those in conflict in former Yugoslavia, added by the author) are threatened with a new and even worse slavery. The gravity of the threat is particularly compounded by the fact of the disarmament and unreadiness of the Slavic nations to solidly resist the new cycle of enslavement and exploitation".

At the practical level, it is the war waged by Leviathan against the fatherland, against the very right to having the fatherland. Defending his fatherland on the borders of their ethnic space, which coincides with the front line of the defence of Eurasia, where the new Serbian state will be born, the Serbs defend that right and those fatherlands for the sake of those who dissolve their own, unaware of what they actually do (Kalajić, 2024, p. 197). In that war, the Serbs are not those who destroy, but those who build. That is why their task on the front is much more difficult: unlike their opponents, they have no right to a "nihilistic victory", which is reflected in the amount of the destroyed, and not in the beauty of the defended and built (Kalajić, 2024, p. 127). That is exactly what Kalajić, despite all the challenges and resisting the war begin reduced to destruction, wrote about in his 1992 text "Towards the Slavic Empire".

The "nihilistic victory" is a "privilege" of those who, aware that their idea of the "new world order" is not eternal, after all, or perhaps not even possible, fear from the punishment prepared by the true victors of the Great War that is still taking place.

“Metaphorically speaking, like a gambler who, after a series of big wins, starts to lose his good luck and therefore wants to get out of the game, depriving his partners of the opportunity for a rematch – the strategists of the ‘new world order’ try, by propagating the ideas of the ‘end of history’, to declare the end of the game called ‘history’, fearing the counter-movement of other powers and new ideas” (Kalajić, 2024, p. 135). This idea, created in the trail of the analysis of Francis Fukuyama’s writings, is actually one of Kalajić’s most revolutionary thoughts, which is valid even today, when, finally facing the limitations in Afghanistan, Ukraine, Israel (with ever-problematic Syria), the advocates of the “new world order” have really encountered the threat of punishment. Yet, if we want to fully understand Kalajić, we must understand that we do not need the regime change, but a complete metanoia, a radically changed understanding of the world and the essence of humanity.

It is difficult to say with complete certainty whether the Serbs in the Republic of Serbian Krajina and Republic Srpska, whom Kalajić so gladly visited (and I joined him on several occasions), have understood their actual role. The individual examples Kalajić refers to show that this could be considered with great validity. However, what is most important is to understand the following: Kalajić believed that the Serbs, fortunately, had little influence in terms of playing exactly that role. The role is fatefully associated with them as the people living on the border, on a much broader and larger border than the one covered by former Krajina with the centre in the military command in Vienna. As long as there is a small number of those who understand that role (the parallel drawn

with monasticism and the idea of saving the world is more than acceptable), the Serbs will find the strength and way to resist it. Such resistance, after all, does not have only a physical dimension, but also a spiritual one, so Kalajić thinks that the Serbs are victors regardless of the current outcome of the struggle waged by them, particularly because the essence of that struggle cannot be understood unless the question of soul salvation is included in the analysis.

When asked what should be done in order to resist “the conquest strategy” of the West, Kalajić, providing the examples from the front line, answers that the first and most important step on that road is – awakening. Citing Ágnes Heller, it is necessary to reach a “radical position”, the point where our self-understanding will have to undergo fundamental alterations. Since those alterations necessarily imply the separation from the world which needs to fabricate identities on our behalf and for our own “good”, in practice they, in the period of time in which Kalajić found himself (which, apparently, is not different today), take to war.

Those who in such a situation stand aside are despised by Kalajić, considering them “ill-intentioned” and “crazed”. They are the worst offspring of their own time, the very image of the world refusing to face its own dissolution, blaming the messenger who warns them of their state of illness. Those are the people who do not see that in there are moments in history in which the pathological state of society demands a radically different reaction. That is exactly the case recorded by Dragoš among the Serbian fighters on the front. Namely, because of the commotion on the front line, a group of fighters left their older companion on the position towards

the Muslims – due to his difficult condition, he was unable to move fast. Having stayed alone, that fighter surrounded himself with ammunition and weapons and began his action; the enemies hesitated, surprised by this reaction and not knowing what was in store. When other Serbian fighters returned to the front line, they asked the older companion where such courage came from. He replied: “It wasn’t courage at all! I had to stay here because my old and wobbly legs would not have taken me far!”

As far as I know and according to Momo Kapor’s words and texts, Kalajić often went to war-stricken areas as a correspondent “on his own”, to those zones that were not safe and where few others wanted to go. Yet, he did not go there as an adventurer but as someone who wanted to make known where he belonged, to the people who did not plan any destruction but the creation of the new world. In that respect, Slobodan Antonić is completely right when finding in Kalajić’s work “effective pessimism”, which denotes “heroic defiance to the spirit of time” among the Serbian fighters on the front. In their sacrifice, Kalajić saw a clear “ethical principle of the struggle to the last man, for the world which exists solely as an idea – because it was completely torn down” (Kalajić, 2024, p. 57).

That is why Momo Kapor noted on numerous occasions that he had never seen a braver man than Dragoš Kalajić. We who knew him can agree with Kapor’s statement, remembering Dragoš’s famous, almost ballet-like dance in Suva Međa above Dvor on the Una River, despite the enemy’s active attack. In the same way, looking for the evidence of the possibility of despising death and fear for physical existence, Dragoš, ignoring his friends’ warnings, crossed the clear space in Mali Alan, on Velebit. I

wish you could have seen Dragoš and me in summer 1994, while in the truck with the driver, we went along the dust-covered corridor, by Croatian snipers, rushing to our beloved Banjaluka, where General Slavko Lisica welcomed us with a bottle of brandy.

On the front, Kalajić talked to the fighters, ordinary workers, shepherds, barely literate peasants, as well as with the representatives of Italian aristocracy, Russian poets and French philosophers. He always spoke solely about one thing – the destiny of Europe. The only difference was that sometimes those conversations began in roots deeply entrenched in the Serbian border and ended at gunpoint and sometimes they began at gunpoint and spread towards the vast conceptual meta-spaces. While some of those spaces come with the theory and knowledge of philosophy, others conquer them with their heroism and *gusle*-playing on the front lines. Sensing that the former were not worthwhile without the experience of the latter, and that the latter, after their heroism, did not need the knowledge of the former, Dragoš found his full inspiration exactly at the outpost of Eurasia, among the bright characters of the war.

Dragoš loved the front; to be completely precise, he loved strong characters and heroes he encountered in every contact with potential death. While socializing with the fighters, he determined himself in his contempt for cowards, sycophants, compromisers, fakes, parasites and thieves of ideas he left behind, in the capital’s backrooms and fruitless drinking parties of the writers’ society (Kalajić, 2024, p. 34).

Nevertheless, he was afraid of Serbian despondency and through his wartime records he warned of the dangerous readiness of some to “give up

everything”; at the same time, he offered examples of heroism as a call to stay on the salvation path. Perhaps the most beautiful example is that of Colonel Jezdimir Lakićević who “in the seventh decade of his life left his pensioner armchair in front of TV in order to defend his people, taking over the command of the artillery of the Herzegovina Corpus”.

Kalajić’s most appealing war experience with the army was *friendship, camaraderie*, described by him as “not only the fundamental condition of warrior life, but also its most precious common fruit to which all who tasted it will stay loyal to the end of their lives”. It is totally specific *friendship*, so different from that in communism, essentially valueless and meaningless, something that can be experienced only on the front. The readers of Dragoš’s texts in *Duga* might anticipate it: “there is no difference in the domain of dignity between a nobleman and a farmer, an intellectual and a worker, a rich man’s son and a poor son”.

That *camaraderie* as such, Kalajić wrote, is nothing new for the Serbs. In fact, it is the essence of egalitarianism, so present in the Serbian political culture. Even if he had not offered anything else but the awareness that the Serbian aspiration for equality and liberty did not come from the false enlightenment ideals and communist ideological distortions, but from the warrior, covenant *camaraderie*, he would have completed his profound ethical mission.

“Nihilistic victories” of our enemies – which are commemorated these days, while I am finishing these modest lines, on Croatian hippodromes, on the fortress of Knin and the fortress of (self-)deception in Srebrenica – are, in these terms, larger defeats than ours, that is materially tangible. In that truth revealed to us by Kalajić, it seems to me that even today, three

decades after the fall of Krajina and two decades after Dragoš’s death, lies the source of strength we need if we want to survive and finally win.

## Teacher, friend and difficult ally

Dragoš Kalajić was a teacher not because we had an enamoured and uncritical relationship to his erudition and beauty of his spirit, but because in the conversation, both with us and with the broader public, he did not need to ingratiate himself with anyone, not even Serbian nationalists, who could be expected to read him most intensively. He clearly and bluntly expresses his positions, with which those reading him may agree and follow him, or reject him and stay aside.

It is exactly from there that Kalajić often turned his blade towards Serbian nationalists, particularly those who appeared in large numbers in the 1990s and who looked at this idea as banal expansionism. Instead of such false nationalism, Kalajić wrote and spoke about nationalism as defence from “the plague of liberal capitalism” which, at the moment of the collapse of the communist East, clearly manifested its colonial and “conquering urges” (Kalajić, 2024, p. 83). Expansionist nationalism, as Kalajić informed the Serbs, is only “pseudo-imperialism”, which neither cares for its own starting points nor relies on tradition, but exists solely as part of the “Judeo-protestant” cultural circle of the decadent West.

Dragoš Kalajić was a friend not because he was willing to be there whenever we needed him, but because everything he said, pleasant or not to our ears and souls, was said out of love, with no second

thoughts and malice. That is why we thought with full attention about his idea that every sound nationalism (and he wanted Serbian nationalism, which was in its revival stage at the time, to be exactly like that) had to take a clear, theoretical and practical attitude towards three questions: whether it brought well-being to its own nation; whether it provided welfare to other nations; and whether it contained sufficient spiritual strength to participate in the “creation of a new cultural-civilizational circle and cycle” (Kalajić, 2024, pp. 206-207). To this day, I have not been sure whether we can answer affirmatively to these questions, completely fundamental in their nature.

Finally, it is not easy to have Dragoš Kalajić for an ally. Sharp and always special, he made us wonder, look deep into our souls and admit our own faults. After death separated him from our time, he leaves us the possibility to ask whose po-

sitions he would support in today's divided Serbia. Seeking an answer to this question is particularly difficult having in mind that his friends, as it usually happens, found themselves on different, mutually opposed sides.

Since all Kalajić's features are considered national, the repeated search for answers to three questions might help us, so divided and fragmented, to find ourselves doing the same task. In that task of defending Eurasia, these records by Kalajić about the war and from the war, which testify not only about the ideals of humanity and heroism, but also about falls, despondency, treason and unconcern, may be a valuable ally. They may be yet another bullet frame, much needed, which we will put into a gun at a crucial moment and shoot the same enemy that is still looked at from the heavenly heights by our teacher, friend and ally, Dragoš Kalajić.

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