

Mark Thompson, *Paper House: The Ending of Yugoslavia*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1992. Pp. 350.

The author of this book, Mark Thompson, is identified as the London correspondent for *Mladina*, a weekly journal which began as the official voice of the Youth League in Slovenia. *Mladina*, in the mid to late 80s, was the most talked about Slovene publication. Its popularity even spilled over into neighboring Yugoslav republics. *Mladina's* large audience (80,000 circulation in Summer 1988) was generated by its anti-establishment stance, which grew cockier with each defiant issue. Subscribers, a group increasingly fed up with both Belgrades (capitals of Serbia and of Yugoslavia), loved it, and they rallied to the support of *Mladina* writers when they were arrested for treason in Spring 1988.

Thompson's book, which is really a kind of travelogue that interrupts itself from time to time to fill the reader in on historical background, covers Yugoslavia from the late Eighties through the Spring of 1992 (ending before the war erupted in Bosnia and Hercegovina). There are no footnotes. There is a sparse, but adequate, bibliography. The narrative is lively, characterized by the style of a certain genre of travel writing that the British can excel at, especially when titillated by a southern European climate and in the company of exotic peoples. It also exudes an admiration for the intellectual daring and sexiness of Ljubljana's youth sub-culture of the 1980s.

Thompson opens his journey through Yugoslavia's former republics with a lengthy chapter (nearly sixty pages) entitled "Slovenian Spring." Subsequent sections, including "Istrian Summer," — the setting is an August seaside vacation spot near Umag with Slovene friends at their "vikend" retreat, — seem to be viewed through a "Slovene" filter. "Slovenian Spring," the chapter which probably will interest *Slovene Studies* readers most, links an unusual assortment of topics. A hike in the vicinity of Gorica/Gorizia and Nova Gorica (the former in Italy, the latter in Yugoslavia), where no Berlin-like wall separated West and East, is used to illustrate the relatively benign nature of Yugoslav Communism. The author also discusses the career of Edvard Kardelj, the Slovene ideologue who was the brains behind Yugoslavia's socialist regime, treating him rather sympathetically. As might be expected, the Slovene youth culture and the fringe social movements of the 80s are described at length and with a passion, especially for the Punks, of whom the group Laibach gained genuine renown in Western Europe. Thompson also probes the depths of Slovene history, character, and psychology with visits to Carinthia's Gosposvetsko polje (in Austria), the source of Slovene political tradition, and to Bohinj and Bled which evoke the legend of how and at what cost the Slovenes were Christianized. The story was, of course, immortalized in *Krst pri Savici*, a poem by Prešeren. Also treated quite extensively in this chapter is the gathering which took place at Kočevski Rog in the summer of 1990. Here, at the site of mass graves of *domobranci*, a national reconciliation (*sprava*) between winners and losers (Thompson's terms) of

World War II achieved a kind of post-Communist catharsis. Thompson, who covered the story for *Mladina*, was very moved by the event and treats it with great sensitivity.

Thompson's Yugoslavia is a fragile entity, what he calls a paper house. Its inhabitants, however, are strong and mostly they are survivors. Some are politicians, whom the author generally depicts uncharitably; most others are sympathetic people who tell him their stories on buses, in coffee shops and so on. Their sense of history is often largely mythological. Thompson's book is useful as a companion to media reports on the continuing conflicts in former Yugoslavia. It tells many stories, but only confirms how very complex — even incomprehensible — life and death in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-cultural country can be.

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Paul Parin. *Es ist Krieg und wir gehen hin. Bei den jugoslawischen Partisanen*. Berlin: Rowohlt, 1991. 286 pp. ISBN: 3-87134-029-4.

Paul Parin. *Untrügliche Zeichen von Veränderung: Jahre in Slowenien*. [1st ed., 1980.] 3rd ed. Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1992. 188 pp. ISBN: 3-434-50012-X.

In 1945, Paul Parin watched as a top official of socialist Montenegro distributed coupons redeemable for operations. It was amusing that the naive peasants would then trade the coupons with friends and relatives for the operations of their choice, or that they would use them simply to have themselves x-rayed, which was held to bring magical cures. But the political side of these coupons — their distribution as a means of keeping power in a politically primitive society — serves to remind the reader of the vast amount of political content in these two works. A central theme of both of them is the nature of politics in Yugoslavia, and Parin's ultimate disillusionment with changing it for the better. The last line on the coupons, alas, seems to have been laughed out of existence before its mission was fulfilled: "smrt fašizmu, sloboda narodu."

Paul Parin, a psychiatrist in Zürich, both informs and entertains the reader in these two detailed autobiographical studies of the time he spent in Slovenia, Montenegro, and Serbia. Viewed together, the works contain a wealth of material on at least three major themes: first, an account of the Partisan war by a foreigner; second, the complex relationship between socialism's failure in Yugoslavia and a sympathetic foreigner's disillusionment with the country as a whole; and third, the relationship of an upper-class Swiss to Slovenia, the land of his birth.

*Es ist Krieg* is the story of a team of Swiss doctors who served with Tito's army from October, 1944 until the fall of 1945. Parin and the other six physicians had at their disposal some left-over funds of the CSS (Centrale Sanitaire Suisse), which had been founded some years earlier to give medical assistance to the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War. Their month-long journey to the front—by truck, cruise ship, train,