

DRAŽEN PETROVIĆ AND VLADE DIVAC: ONCE BROTHERS OF DIFFERENT RACE DURING THE SHINING SPORT AND DECLINING SELF-MANAGEMENT ECONOMICS

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Abstract

The primary motivation in this paper is inspired by the notion “brothers” from two perspectives: first, the official and popular motto of Yugoslavia was “brotherhood and unity”; and second, “Once Brothers” sports documentary film released on 12 October 2010 featuring the relationship between the basketball stars Dražen Petrović and Vlade Divac. The secondary motivation derived from my research interest in the Yugoslav economic system of self-management socialism. Although the causes of Yugoslavia’s collapse are relatively well established in the mainstream theory, this paper aims at investigating another aspect which was thriving and becoming a golden age at the time when economic performance had taken an unstoppable downward turn. This paradox in the deepening of economic crisis and political tensions culminating in the civil wars, made many former Yugoslav sportsmen and most of their fans even today to hold politics responsible for their separation. Current sport generation or those who had not experienced the Yugoslav golden age of 1980s, seem to regret and rumor that, had Yugoslavia not broken apart, her national teams apart from basketball were on the way of dominating the international sport in many competitions. But did sport, basketball, by which Yugoslavia was increasing her international reputation, played any or supporting role in rising nationalism and outbreak of the civil wars? This paper will go into broader and deeper causes of a small incident between two famous “Once Brothers”, with spillover subsequent effects and consequences.

Keywords: Yugoslavia, national identity, self-management, basketball, “Once Brothers”

1. Introduction

Following the death of the longtime leader Josip Broz known by the nickname Tito on 04 May 1980, Yugoslavia remained a socialist country with her distinctive economic model of self-management. The economy took a downward trend with increasing unemployment and hyperinflation, decreasing production and exports while imports were rising, eventually leading to the disintegration of the country that began in the early 1990s. The bloody collapse through the civil wars associated with ethnic cleansing, genocide, and crimes against humanity, inspired the popular belief to this today that it all happened because Tito was not alive to imprison those that came into power to fuel nationalism, as he had done before to save “brotherhood and unity” between nations and nationalities of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). However, the 1980s were SFRY’s decade that produced what the world came to know and remember the best of her. Sports, music, and entertainment were thriving among all her nations and nationalities. Leaving aside deteriorating economic performance, which is shown by official data and covered by numerous studies, the 1980s were Yugoslavia’s golden age and the 1990s as the darkest era. Everything that the NBA (National Basketball Association) and the world of basketball know about many Yugoslavs who made their way there, came from the basketball era of 1980s. Dražen Petrović (22.10.1964 – 07.06.1993) was the first to open the way to the NBA not only for his fellow Yugoslavs such as Vlade Divac but also for the rest European basketball players. Dražen and Vlade are inducted into the FIBA Hall of Fame, and enshrined into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. Yugoslavia was known as a hub of basketball outside the U.S. with strong clubs winning European championships and cups, and the Yugoslav National Basketball Team many world competitions. If politics,

economics, and nations were the deteriorating factors giving rise to nationalism, basketball was seen as the main force which not only held the country together but was getting stronger at all levels: as a national team, as clubs, and as individual players.

What really happened during increased and strengthened brotherhood and unity in the sport during the 1980s and how it unexpectedly turned Yugoslavia into a slaughterhouse and seven successor independent states, this paper will go to discover by focusing on her sport, basketball in particular. A broader and interdisciplinary approach is used to provide a more comprehensive answer to what has been produced as “Once Brothers” which featured the broken relationship between Dražen Petrović and Valde Divac. The legacy of the story generated in 2010 continues to be debated without having the other side or Dražen. Given that Yugoslavia was a multinational state with frequent conflicts over national identity differences, for which “Once Brothers” is produced as an interesting or sensational story, I have considered in section one of this paper the theories on nations and national identities. A subsection emerged or was almost unavoidable to discuss national identities, races, and minorities in former Yugoslavia because here too, the historical and cultural differences were more interesting than in the rest of Europe, which helps us better understand how the brothers emerged, separated, implications beyond, and their legacy. Section two reviews the sports development in the 1980s at the time when the economy of self-management socialism had taken a downward trend. The first subsection discusses the experience with centralization versus decentralization in SFRY related to politics, economics, and sports. Introducing economics was important because of regional development disparities which then could be taken for comparison in sports. As a result of centralization or decentralization, the mobility of players and coaches within the clubs and federal units is described in the second subsection. The third subsection focuses on the first sensitive incident of national character between two main rivals in football, Dinamo of Zagreb and Crvena Zvezda (Red Star) of Belgrade, in their match in Zagreb. To prove that this was and can be categorized as the first serious incident and riots in sports on a national basis, the subsection will initially refer to ordinary incidents between the teams in basketball matches that happen almost anywhere in the world for the game and play purposes. The fourth subsection deals with one legacy of self-management or the best of it, which is not related to anything from politics and economics, and that is about basketball. Section three elaborates what many readers expected and what the title of this paper is about – the official and alternative version of the “Once Brothers” by going into more details about an incident that gave it rise. Knowing its importance, the section has two additional subsections, the first of which considers the impact it had on Croatia, Croats, Serbia, and Serbs, while the second raises and discusses the hypothesis of whether similarities or differences became the cause of hatred and separation of brothers. Section four makes a summary of the state of the sports, its disintegration, and the export of talents from successor states of former Yugoslavia. The second subsection provides an overview of how the Yugoslav basketball talent lives on scattered, partially in her successor states and more as individual talents abroad, mostly in the NBA. Apart from conclusions, the last section sums up the legacy and provides the lessons learned. Throughout this paper, the references to the theory have been used as appropriate or distributed to respective sections and not like in most standard papers that accumulate the theory in just one section, usually after the introduction. For some events of the time such as certain matches and incidents, there is no need for neither a detailed reference nor the entire event and story. Sportsmen, journalists, and researchers can not only question this paper, but those whose former sportsmen whose name is referred to and are reading this paper, are welcome to appear in public and say: “Well, I know what he is talking about me in that case, so let me explain it into more details.”

2. Definition and theories of nations and national identities

Defining a nation and nationality may be simple but understanding them in real terms is difficult as they have evolved over different times and historical circumstances to the present day. They can still be defined today and redefined in the future. In one basic definition, a nation is a group of people who share common features such as language, history, place, origin, and territory. Smith (1991) considered it more as a kind of political

community with particular interests. The difficulty in defining it made Anderson (1983) view the nation as an imaginary while James (1996) as an abstract community in the sense that a group of people perceives it as being part of that group.

In the course of history, the meaning and understanding of a nation, nationality, and the people have evolved. Based on some components used to define the nation such as language, we would witness the emergence of the state, social organization, and tensions between ethnic groups, especially from the 18th century. Even today, many people use the reference to certain civilizations in antiquity as being their descendants. Many maybe, but many others due to the change in the system of rules and organization are not. In the pagan era, most people lived in the slave system under a king, leader, or emperor, with many others in isolated communities ruled by and accountable to, no one. Monotheist religions will set some rules for governing the communities of people and will export it beyond. Then a derivative or reinterpretation of the rules will lead to alternative religions such as Christianity and Islam from Judaism. The division will further be diversified between the religions themselves. The Great Schism of 1054 still left religion being the main force of rule, despite happening on a cultural or language basis – the Eastern Orthodox dominated by the influence of the Greek language, and the Western Catholics based on the Latin language. Furthermore, it will be languages that would lead to the reformation of religion in the 16th century among the people in the West. Religion remained the main ruling system until the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, and the national awakening of many people who found themselves having a separate identity. Throughout the late Middle Ages and until the outbreak of WWI, much of the people in the world were ruled by monarchies. The rise of nations, nationalism, and nation-states in the 19th and 20th century has made many people trace their identity or identify themselves with some groups or people of the past such as ancient Egyptians, Israelites, Greeks, Assyrians, and so on. The modern concept and understanding of the nation, however, is primarily based on citizenship or the country in which the people live, including their ethnicity. This has become the most important, if not the final answer, to a nation, irrespective of a potential link to the distant past.

There are plenty of examples where national and racial identity is lost, got assimilated, transformed or earned a different nomination by the location and citizenship. Yet, a number of them claim the false ancestry that they do not have. An example of this can be the identity of modern Jews and Palestinians with ancient Israelites. As with modern Egyptians, the Palestinians do not share the same national identity heritage as the Jews; the Palestinians are Arabs who got their name only after the land in which they happened to be found living. Similarly, the modern Jews in Israel are not the descendants of ancient Israelites despite making and embracing cultural claims towards them. Sand (2009) dismissed any potential descent of modern Jews or their linkage to Ancient Israelites. Instead, he maintains that the modern Jews are largely converts of the Khazars, Berbers, and Arabs while the exodus might have not happen. The newcomers to the modern state of Israel are seen as a group of people neither having anything with ancient Israelites nor between themselves. The Jews from Poland and Ukraine immigrating to Israel are different from those of Ethiopia and Iran.

Earlier, another Jew named Koestler (1977) from Hungary, just like Sand questioned the historical validity of the Bible's New Testament narrative about the Jews. In his book "The Thirteenth Tribe: The Khazarian Empire and Its Heritage", Koestler also rejects the claim that modern Jews in Israel have descended from the 12 tribes of ancient Israelites. In other words, the 13th tribe is meant to demonstrate how modern Ashkenazi Jews who make up to 80% of total Jews are descendants of the Khazars, a Turkic people who inhabited modern-day Ukraine and southwestern Russia to the Caucasus. Some scholars trying to verify or refute Koestler's hypothesis such as Nebel et al (2005) by DNA studies, found the Jews to have more Y chromosomes related to the Middle Eastern countries than the Eastern European people. Around 12% of the data from the DNA tests were linked to the possible relation of the Khazars. What was also known and reported in history, is that the ruling class of the Khazars had converted to Judaism during the 8th and 9th centuries A.D. The problem with the DNA studies published in prestigious or well-known indexed journals is that neither you as a reader nor I who have written this paper have verified that; we are only reading what has been published. A printed book, paper, or visual documentary served cannot be verification. If the Khazarian origin of Ashkenazim or the

overwhelming majority of the modern Jews causes some doubts and conspiracies, two critical questions deserve attention: i) why the Jews who are supposed to be Semitic people like the Palestinians have always been more enlightened, proficient, and revolutionary?; and ii) in a kind of answer to the first question, is it because the modern Jews of Israel are of the Khazarian origin? One may attribute the difference between the Jews and the Palestinians to their different religion, with the first as it appears to have contributed more to civilization and proficiency, compared to the latter as being blamed for lagging behind as a result of Islam. Religion does not appear to have caused such a division in civilization and skills as can be proven by many examples in European countries and nations.

Apart from disputes in published research over the origin of the Ashkenazi Jews and whether the Jews who migrated to the modern state of Israel are mostly Khazars, it is useful to consider where they came from after the Holocaust. The location of the Khazarian Empire stretching through modern Ukraine, the Black Sea, Caucasus, Volga River, and the shores of the Caspian Sea, matches a lot of where the largest number of Jews in the world was concentrated. According to Geifman (1999), the Russian Imperial Census of 1897 recorded the number of Jews by language as over 5 million or 4.03% and even higher by religion (4.15% or 5,215,805). A distribution map by ethnicity shows that the overwhelming majority of the Jews were dispersed in modern-day Ukraine, southwestern Russia, and Belarus. Where did such a large or the largest group of Jews come from? Did they make their way from the Middle East to Italy and the Iberian Peninsula (modern Spain and Portugal) then migrated further through France, Germany, Hungary, and end up in large numbers in Poland, Belarus, and Ukraine? Why end up or getting concentrated there? Or, is it that a number of them migrated westwards to Germany, France, the UK, and beyond to America as it appears more likely?

The American national identity is based on the citizenship of the melting pot consisting of different nations, peoples, races, and faiths. Their origin can be traced to various parts of the world where they came from. For example, African-Americans like Shaquille O'Neil, Michael Jordan, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, LeBron James, and Kobe Bryant are descendants of Ancient Egyptians or those who built the Great Pyramids, completely different from modern Egyptians who are Arabs. How do we know that the ancestors of these NBA players built the pyramids nearly five millennia ago? This can be proven by the face in the sculpture of the Great Sphinx of Giza, and numerous other statues from Ancient Egypt. The nose of the Great Sphinx along with many statues was deliberately broken during the racial inquisition as the vandals thought it looks like a typical Negro or would resemble in the future to the one of Shaq, MJ, Muhammad Ali, Mike Tyson, or Colin Powell. All of these are considered African-Americans, though in a narrower definition they are the descendants of ancient Egyptians.

As it appears, the nation and national identity in modern times are shaped by the system of rules governing the communities, namely the citizenship. This holds also for former Yugoslavia which is the focus of this paper where, the national identity, apart from race and language, is shaped by the last names of geographical locations, professions, and even of foreign nations. In this respect, the emergence of national identity is often a matter of circumstantial events. If so, it largely backs the theory of those who view it as an abstract or imaginary community that has a feeling and perception of belonging to a certain nation. Perhaps, nowhere else this is more complex than with the Slavic peoples of former Yugoslavia that the following subsection will discuss.

2.1. National identities and minorities of former Yugoslavia

“I am a Serb, he [Dražen Petrović] was a Croat. Serbs and Croats are the same people”
– Vlade Divac.

“Russians and Ukrainians are the same people”
– Vladimir Putin.

Following the disintegration of the Austria-Hungary Empire after WWI, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was formed by the end of 1918, and from 1929 known renamed as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. One

of the primary reasons for the Kingdom coming into being was that during Austria-Hungary rule in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Vojvodina, Slavs were drafted into the army to fight against their fellow Serbs in Serbia. Even Josip Broz – Tito (of Slovenian mother and Croatian father) was captured as a prisoner of war by Russia in Bukovina. Historical accounts suggest that Tito was loyal to Austria-Hungary as long as he preferred to remain as an unguarded prisoner of war in Russia rather than be sent to fight alongside the Serbian army against Central Powers (West, 1995).

National identities have always been a complicated and uneasy issue to be dealt with and resettling in Yugoslavia since after WWI. The question goes earlier in the 19th century when the south Slavs did not have a unified language, thus it was difficult to distinguish nations and nationalities as we can do so today. The first and most known writer, linguist, politician, and journalist who campaigned for a pan-Slavic linguistic and ethnic unity was Ljudevit Gaj (1809-1872), a Croat from then Austria-Hungary Empire. The campaign was known as the Illyrian Movement, which did not succeed to the extent it wanted for a common south Slavic language, though it led to the Serbo-Croatian language, a wholly unrelated to Illyrian. At the time or by the end of 1918 when the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was declared, the three nations accounted for over 71% of the total population. Sizeable minorities included Bosnian Muslims (6.05%), Bulgarians (4.87%), Germans (4.27%), Hungarians (3.93%), and Albanians (around 3.68%) (Banac, 1992). Soon, different nations, religions, and nationalities will not find it easy to go on together. A rivalry and dispute began between those who were closest associated or had similarities, Serbs, and Croats respectively. In April 1941 the Axis Powers invaded and divided the country according to their spheres of interest with the Independent State of Croatia as a puppet state. After WWII, communist Yugoslavia was reorganized into six republics and two autonomous provinces as federal units. They were intended to represent different nations or their identities, though in a multinational state with a mixed population it proved to be very difficult as the main question to answer was “where to draw the lines of administrative divisions along national lines?” In any case, the following were the republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Serbia having two autonomous provinces (Kosovo, and Vojvodina). Macedonia from 1913 to 1946 was part of Serbia when it gained the status of a republic in the Yugoslav federation. Mainly inhabited by Bulgarians, a new national identity as Slav Macedonians began to emerge, which Bulgaria rejects to the present day, though scholarly debate goes on about the identity of Slav Macedonians.

The most heterogeneous was Bosnia-Herzegovina which, as of the 1991 census, had the following ethnic composition: 43.74% Bosniaks, 31.21% Serbs, 17.38% Croats, 5.54% Yugoslavs, and 2.43% others. Her borders were not drawn on national lines but redrawn where they used to be during the Austria-Hungary time bordering the Ottoman Empire. The same border run with what would become the Socialist Republic of Croatia which before her current independence, hosted over 12% Serbs in total population. Further to the northwest were concentrated Slovenians who got their republic named after them. Upon historical accident, the approximate extended borders of Montenegro were also drawn from the independence of 1878. The border between Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina is largely drawn along the river Drina River, on both sides of which live mostly Serbs, and Bosniaks in the Sandžak region of Serbia. This is exactly the river where the first great European division was made in the year 395 within the Roman Empire, into Western or Latin, and Eastern or Byzantium. At the time, there were no Slavs in the Balkans. After 724 years, in 1054 respectively, the Great Schism occurred in the same line or river where the western part became Roman Catholics and those to the east as Eastern Orthodox¹.

¹ Yet another and perhaps most important thing to note about this river, is the historical novel *The Bridge on the Drina* by Ivo Andrić (1892-1975), published in 1945. Andrić received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1961 and the aforementioned novel is considered as his best. Born to Croatian Catholic parents in Travnik of central Bosnia, then part of Austria-Hungary, he spent his childhood in Višegrad town. He mostly wrote in Serbian Cyrillic, is highly regarded in Serbian literature but is a controversial figure in Croatia and among the Bosniaks. Among others, Andrić was a close friend of Gavrilo Princip, a Serb who had assassinated Archduke of Austria-Hungary that would become one of the most critical cause of sparking WWI. Austria-Hungarian authorities had him arrested and kept in captivity until July 1917. The bridge in Višegrad was built by Mehmed Paša Sokolović, a Serb from Višegrad who served

National identification has been complex and that is why we were having an increasing number of Yugoslavs as a national identity apart from their citizenship. The Yugoslavs were not only citizens by their country of birth and citizenship but a kind of separate national identity that was being formed alongside the South Slavic people. The number of those declared as “Yugoslavs” was steadily growing from 1.33% in 1971 to 5.40% or a total of 1,216,463 in the 1981 census. This new Yugoslav identity or nation came from different people who wished to be identified as such, including Albanians, Hungarians, Roma, Gorani, and other ethnic groups. The largest share, of course, came from the South Slavs, with the highest percentage being in Croatia and Vojvodina at 8.2% each, to be followed by 7.9% in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This invention of the Yugoslavs was probably one of the ways by which the people wanted to forget their bitter national relations of the past and resolve their differences subsequently into a unified state under a kind of common identity (Sekulić et al, 1994). But it did not work. Nations in former Yugoslavia, especially among the South Slavic peoples, are now mostly shaped by language and the territory in which they lived, and the citizenship they obtained after independence. Just as Slav Macedonians were named after the place where they lived, so became largely the Montenegrins after the 2006 independence whose language was Serbo-Croatian.

The race is a different thing. Anyone can be Serb, Croat, Slovene, or Albanian by the language s/he speaks and the citizenship. Vlade Divac identifies himself as a Serb, though by race he is a Romani born in the town of Prijepolje, southwestern modern Serbia. Until 1913, Prijepolje was part of Kosovo Vilayet under Ottoman rule. The number of Romani people in the Balkans is either underestimated or many of them want to identify themselves with the majority of the people in the state in which they live, like Divac with the Serbs. The prejudice against the Romani well integrated with other peoples has made many of them hide their true identity or origin, and even feel this identification as an offense to them. Another example of famous Romani in the Balkans is Kosovo’s first President Ibrahim Rugova (1944-2006). Any reference to or mentioning this will be met with strong public reaction both by Albanians and Serbs. That is how the mentality in the Balkans is. In the U.S., no one cares if Michael Jordan is a Negro with American citizenship and his native language is English. What matters in the modern world is cultural development or how good you are in various professions, e.g. playing basketball.

The Yugoslav people that identify themselves by nations such as Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, or even Albanians whose language is very different from Slavic and not proven to be related to any other Indo-European language, are eager to claim their ancestral identity. Historical events, circumstances, and evidence largely refute this. Various rulers, population mixture, and their legacy can directly be also related to their last names. For example, Franjo Arapović (Croatian basketball player) derived his last name from “Arab”, which is a common last name also among Albanians as “Arapî.” Goran Hadžić (1958-2016), a Serb former nationalist politician and war criminal from Croatia got his last name from Arabic “Haj-I” meaning tourist, with a reference to those who visited the Kaaba in Mecca (now in Saudi Arabia). It is the same case with Blagoje Adžić (a Serb former general). Then, the Serb last name Arnautović means the son of Albanian (from Turkish, Arnaut – Albanian). Albanians on the other hand have plenty of last names of Slavic origin, as they also have many after foreign nations such as Allamani (a German tribe), Arapi (Arab), Boshnjaku (Bosnian), Bugari (Bulgarian), Čeku (Czech), Čerkezi (Circassian), Gorani (Gorani), Kurti (Kurd), Maqedonci (Macedonian), Maxharri (Hungarian), Rusi (Russian), Turkaj (Turkish), Vlasi/aliu (Wallachian), Xhezairi (Algerian, from Turkish “Cezayir”), and so on. One would wonder where do such last names after foreign nations come from and why? A more detailed explanation goes beyond the scope of this paper, but we can highlight that most of them indeed were of such nations who happened to live among Albanians and later had the Albanian language as their native. A crisscross of the last names between Albanians and the Slavs is also evident, such as Daci – Dačić (Ivica Dačić, Daci from Albanian means “Tomcat”), Manxhuka - Mandžukić (Mario Mandžukić), Qosja-Ćosić

15 years as a Grand Vizier (Prime Minister) of the Ottoman Empire under three Sultans (Ottoman Kings). The river Drina is where the division of Roman Empire and the Great Schism occurred. The widely read and imposed in schools of Yugoslavia, the *Bridge on the Drina* would inspire the genocide against Bosnian Muslims, on both sides of the bridge with many executions carried out on the bridge itself and the corpses thrown into Drina.

(Krešimir Ćosić), and perhaps, the most important one for the relevance of this paper that deserves special attention that the reader might have been looking for, Pjetri/Petrovci – Petrović (Dražen Petrović).

Where the last name Petrović does come from and what is Dražen's ancestry for which he never cared about or knew about it? This is important to explain for the sake of the "Once Brothers" documentary and the scholars specialized in national identity and heritage research. The name Petrović comes from Saint Peter who, according to the Bible, was one of the 12 Apostles of Jesus Christ. That is the very earliest source that is spread to many nations today, like Peterson among the Anglo-Saxons. Certainly, Dražen's ancestry can never be traced back to Saint Peter. The variants of last names for Peter in the Balkans are Pjetri/Petrovci (Albanian), Petrev/ski, Petrov/ski (Bulgarian, North Macedonian, and other Slavic), and Petrić, Petrović (Serb, Croatian, Slovenian). Petrović became a well-known last name from 19th century onwards in Montenegro (from Petar I Petrović-Njegoš, 1748-1830) and in Serbia (from Đorđe Petrović, known as Karađorđe, 1768-1817). Let us consider this one from Serbia, because, his origin is also from Montenegro, and more importantly, that is the one whose descendants became the rulers or monarchy of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918-1939).

Đorđe Petrović was born in the village of Viševac in modern central Serbia, then part of the Ottoman Empire. His father Petar Jovanović (Jovanović today in Serbia is the most widespread last name) is reported to have been a highwayman (brigand, or hajduk). Some sources or the main ones such as Stojančević (1982), Banac (1984), Roberts (2007), and Morrison (2008) identified him as a descendant of the Vasojevići tribe, while no other alternative claim exists. If so, then what was the nationality of the Vasojevići tribe that existed in modern eastern Montenegro close to the border with Albania, and Kosovo? Most authors, among others (Vickers, 1998; Elsie, 2015; Duicu, 2015; Heiko, 2019) on the national identity of the Vasojevići tribe, agree that this was most likely an Albanian tribe as Vasaj or Vasoviqi which gradually integrated with the Slavic neighbors and got Slavicized. A tribe, however, is not a nation, thus the Serbs, Croats, and Albanians tracing their national identity through the Middle Ages to ancient times are highly questionable, if not irrelevant to some extent. If national identity is largely a matter of evolving circumstances, then this fits into the mainstream theory that the nation is more a matter of perception by individuals and communities rather than a fixed phenomenon for a long time. The area where the Petrović of both Serbs and Montenegrins originated (Northern Albania, Montenegrin coastline, and Herzegovina) was historically well-known for Pirates raiding the Roman Empire merchant navy in the Adriatic Sea. This may make someone believe in a pejorative way that the people in modern times in this area collectively are prejudiced as thieves such as Albanians, maybe the descendants of the same ancient thieves, i.e. of Illyrian origin. Certainly, modern Albanians do have some cultural and traditional ties to ancient Illyrians in the area, and that is more than any other people. However, the problem is that the cultural identity of modern Albanians is shaped in modern times, and by the DNA tests they are found to be a mixture with other Balkan peoples. That is why we come across a lot of their last names such as Arapi, Boshnjaku (Bosnian), Maxharri (Hungarian), Maqedonci (Macedonian), Gorani, Rusi, Vllasaliu, which are not accidental. The son of a hajduk (highwayman) named Đorđe Petrović is found born into an area dominated by Serbs, thus he spoke Serbian and rose against the Ottoman Rule in the First Serbia Uprising (1804-1813). The opposing Ottoman forces from the Balkans included Albanians, Bosniaks, Serbs, and others that had converted to Islam for better opportunities and superior rule that the Ottomans brought. Those living in poorer and harsher conditions, especially the hajduks, of course, had to rebel against the ruler for freedom and better living conditions.

A greater genetic linkage to ancient Illyrians can be found among the people in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia's coastline in Dalmatia, up to the border with Slovenia. However, their native language is Serbo-Croatian, which is a Slavic language. The genetic composition may have little importance in creating modern national identity. For example, Jovan "Jole" Petrović, the father of Dražen Petrović, was born in Trebinje of Herzegovina (modern Bosnia and Herzegovina). He migrated to Šibenik in Dalmatia (modern Croatia) and married Biserka Mikulandra, with whom he had two sons: Aleksandar and Dražen Petrović. Jovan's aunt Gospava had migrated to Serbia and her nephew became the Serb basketball player Dejan Bodiroga. That is how quickly the national identity can emerge – a part of the family went to Croatia where the descendants

become Croats, and the other to Serbia became (or remained) Serbs. This should be remembered because of confusion, especially in the Balkans, among many people and scholars who try to establish a direct descent from the early Middle Ages and Antiquity. Linguist and cultural development is a different story as it can be embraced, adopted, and perfected by many.

3. Sports and Self-management socialism of Yugoslavia

In broad terms, like in many human activities, geography and location may also dictate or at least offer some preferences for certain sports activities to advance more compared to others. Environmental or geographical determinism plays a role. As in economics, people began to use the resources they have in their vicinity, earn experience, and get specialized in that activity, so this may to some extent apply to development as well. It is quite obvious why we cannot expect the Egyptians to become good ski jumpers, as it is natural not to expect the people of Nepal to win gold in water polo international competitions. Why should one wonder about the Soviet success in ice hockey from 1963 to its dissolution, and having Sweden and Canada as the main rivals that Riordan (1993) records as Soviet domination? We know that the Soviet Union (and now Russia), Sweden, and Canada have got more snow, ice, and lower temperatures, and not Chad or Niger which are short of even the drinking water. That fits into what Adam Smith would call absolute advantage, by which, Chad has got no chance of competing against Russia or Sweden in ice hockey. If there is some interest and determination in the ice hockey regardless, it would answer the theory of competitive advantage developed by David Ricardo, i.e. it is important for a few African countries to compete in ice hockey but only at the bottom and not amongst the top along with Russia, Finland, Sweden, and Canada because that is impossible². By this token and the assumption based on local development capacities through self-management, we cannot expect those living in the plains of Pannonia (Slavonia in Croatia, and Vojvodina of Serbia, including a part in Hungary) to be good ski jumpers, but this is natural from those that have got the terrain for it, and proved by performance, from Slovenia respectively. Football records a better performance in the countries of relatively low and middle sea-level altitudes such as the European northern plain, England, Argentina, Brazil, Italy, and Spain, and not in the Himalayas, Afghanistan, or the deserts in Saudi Arabia. In basketball, it would be more or less a similar story, *ceteris paribus*. In the former SFRY that would fit the majority of the territory, especially in Serbia and Croatia, not only for the Serbs and Croats that made up to 56% of the total population (Serbs 36%, and Croats 18%). Basketball would depend on natural conditions to a small degree, but more on human physical conditions, investment, and above all, the management. The question is: which management? Centralized, decentralized, or self-management? The answer to this question in the context of SFRY will be explored in more detail in forthcoming subsection 2.1 of this paper.

Sport as an entertainment activity since ancient times was not included, along with services, as a direct component of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which former SFRY called Gross Material Product (GMP). Self-management did not estimate the sport and service sector as productive activities but considered them as having an indirect impact on general economic and social development. The sport was and still can be a business. This is important to remind because self-management despite not considering in economic terms, was through the performance and results of this activity that Yugoslavia became best known. Its direct impact on economic activities could be observed by stadiums and sports halls filled with fans who paid the tickets, thus circulating money, enabling the mobility of people, and raising the demands for services. The fans and their favorite sports teams had to travel from one location to another, thus impacting transport. Higher mobility

² Initially, this theory was elaborated in terms of international trade. Adam Smith (1723-1790) through the principle of specialization promoted the theory that England can trade industrial goods and import agriculture products from those countries that have got better climate conditions to produce them. When the theory was confronted that England can be more productive in agriculture than Portugal as well, the answer was provided by David Ricardo (1772-1823) which advocated that Portugal still can produce wine while being less productive, if the loss in international trade is smaller or the benefits comparatively greater and behind others. See for more details, de Mesquita (2013).

and influx of people increase the demand within the country as well as abroad. In international games and competitions, depending on the distance and duration of sports events, aside from travel expenses, the teams and fans need accommodation, thus contributing to the incomes of the host country. Someone or many are not interested in which team is winning or losing, but how their business activity is faring from it.

Apart from geographical and human conditions, the political and economic system has an important role in organizing, regulating, and developing sports activities, thus the performance may depend on it. SFRY adopted a differentiated socialist model known as self-management socialism that was different not only from the Soviet-style but also from capitalist countries. In other words, self-management was in many ways unique.

3.1. Centralization versus decentralization: politics, economics, and sports: The experience of WWII and atrocities committed, especially by the Ustaše (Croats), Četniks (Serbs), and other anti-communist groups on a national basis, led to the adoption of the brotherhood and unity motto by the communists in power. The communists and the national minorities believed that the people of Yugoslavia have had enough of fighting and slaughtering each other, thus a reconciliation was to rely upon trust, respect, and unity despite the heterogeneous national and cultural nature of the state. Only Slovenia and partially Kosovo were more homogeneous in population. Under this landscape, the political, administrative, and economic organization was a significant challenge. Within Yugoslavia and abroad, there is still a debate on which form or organization could have been better. Greater centralization which Serbia campaigned for was opposed by the rest out of fear that it may lead to Serb domination. A higher degree of decentralization was also associated with the challenges of addressing the problem of regional development disparities, fragmentation, and separatist movements. In any case, greater decentralization was a better option, at least due to the cause that was aimed later through centralization on national lines which brought about war and bloody disintegration. The federal units had gained substantial autonomy over their politics and economics from 1974 onwards, so they could address and try to resolve their affairs at the local level first or by themselves. In economics, decentralization was even more scattered down to enterprise levels. The means of production were officially declared in social ownership and the companies as socially-owned enterprises (SOEs). The workers had the right to use the assets, generate benefits through work and manage the SOEs, but were prohibited to sell them. Under these circumstances, the workers had the incentive to be committed at work as they expected greater benefits for themselves because they were also decision-makers. In other words, in the Yugoslav economic model, the SOEs were Labor Managed Firms (LMF) managed at the local level by the collective of workers who established the worker's council as a central managing organ and elected the director-general.

The SOEs were not like the Soviet-style in state ownership managed by a state centralized bureau or office to implement fixed economic plans. Planning in the Yugoslav self-management socialism was indicative, not mandatory like in centralist socialism. That is why most scholars viewed this as a unique economic model, whose essence Lydall (1984) summarized as decentralization. Scholarly debate and research interest in this economic system had grown immensely both in the communist and capitalist world. The Yugoslav, later Croatian economist, Branko Horvat, 1982 published "The Political Economy of Socialism: A Marxist Approach", in which he demonstrates that the self-management socialist model is more efficient and socially acceptable than centralist socialism and capitalism. In his assessment, self-management in principle is more efficient as it enables to development of local capacities, providing the workers with more incentive to work and reward, better control, and more efficient sanctions against misconduct. In aggregate terms or at the national level, social ownership was considered more efficient than state and private ownership. For his contribution to this model, in 1983 Horvat was nominated for Nobel Prize in Economics by the American Economic Association.

The LMFs referred to earlier, still exist in different parts of the world even today, though they are in different ownership from what the Yugoslav SOEs used to be. They can be in private, cooperative, or community ownership. How efficient they can be? Though there has been no study or comparative analysis about the microeconomic performance of the Yugoslav SOEs vis-à-vis those of capitalist and state socialism

counterparts, the SOEs were successful in obtaining foreign contracts for large projects, especially in Arab countries such as Iraq, and Libya. In absence of this comparative analysis, we may refer to the performance of LMFs in various parts of the world. Bartlett et al (1992) find LMFs or cooperatives in North-Central Italy more labor-intensive, with higher productivity, fewer income differences, and better harmony than the conventional private or capitalist firms. A Meta-analysis (a merge of several studies in one) by Doucouliagos (1995) found profit sharing in the LMFs with higher productivity than in traditional cooperative firms. Later, Fakhfakh et al (2012) using Generalized Least Squares (GLS) and Generalized Moments Method (GMM) in a panel data of several thousand firms, found the cooperatives (LMFs) more effective than conventional firms in using the capital and labor. The cause of this better performance by the LMFs was explained by different methods employed by the firms where, for conventional firms, it was argued that they would be more productive if they were to use inputs by the methods of the LMFs. Similar entities exist in Israel known as Kibbutzim, which initially were established as agriculture cooperatives by local communities. The elements, organizational and operational forms of the LMFs are witnessed in different sectors of society, including defense and war. In SFRY, as part of decentralization, territorial defense was added along the army. Local terrain, people, organization, resources, intelligence, behavior, were part of military doctrine for guerilla warfare in defense. One of the reasons why Israeli army had been efficient in the battlefields, is that combating units often reacted upon the circumstances created on site, without waiting any order from the headquarters. To not go any further with references to the studies on the LMFs, it can be argued that on average, these are more efficient firms, something which Horvat had already established in his theory. The SOEs in SFRY, especially during the 1980s, were poorly performing and the whole economic model was becoming very inefficient. Horvat's theory thus received criticism from micro and macroeconomics perspectives. What went wrong or how it can be explained. At the micro or firm level, despite offering better incentives to the workers and developing local capacities, the erosion of the working discipline was evident for two main reasons: i) SOEs were subject to soft budget constraints or received subsidies from the state when they were in hardships; ii) from the first reason, the workers did not fear much of bankruptcy that is common in LMFs of private cooperative ownership. Erosion of the working discipline happened because of the egoist nature of the workers (and of human nature) despite available incentives. In a market economy based on private ownership and competition, this is not allowed as you can be fired and replaced. After all, most SOEs were in monopoly and/or oligopoly position, thus there was limited or insufficient competition in the market. At the macro level, "Did Horvat answer Hayek?", asked Prychitko (1991) who explained it with "No" by blaming the model for producing one of the most disturbing social and political crises. The degradation, in reality, led to rising unemployment and hyperinflation. Unemployment reached 16.1% in 1987, while annual inflation rate from 1980 to 1988 was 76.8%, to be followed by hyperinflation of 240.5% in 1988 and over 2 000% in 1989. This simultaneous rise of unemployment and inflation was found by Aliu et al (2021) to contradict the traditional Phillips Curve which maintains that an increase in inflation is associated with the decrease in unemployment. Moreover, the Phillips Curve is seen as a short-run phenomenon, but in SFRY by empirical research proved to be a long term reality. It was a price that Yugoslavia would pay for the focus on brotherhood and unity through entertainment such as sport and music to keep the people happy in the course of economic decline and rising unemployment. The forthcoming events would prove that the people cannot stay happy without the needed economic resources and perspective.

Unemployment, in particular, was seen by Woodward (1995) as the cause of decentralized decision-making that was reflected in political and economic fragmentation. In the same spirit, Uvalić (2018) blamed the 1974 Constitution for more autonomy leading to uncoordinated strategies for economic development, and lower labor mobility across federal units, which eventually led to nationalist movements by the end of the 1980s and war at the early 1990s. However, the referred authors blame self-management as a cause of what followed from politics and war, forgetting that even the centralist system which they recommended instead, had also enormous consequences. It is the capitalist model of centralization of Yugoslavia that during WWII caused nationalist crimes against humanity, most notably by the Ustaše in the Independent State of Croatia, thus self-

management socialism was adopted after WWII in response. Once self-management collapsed and the “eternal” capitalist model during the transition was to remerge in the early 1990s, it produced Milosevic (still called the Socialist Party of Serbia) and crimes against humanity. In this sense, Ante Pavelić during WWII and Slobodan Milošević during the 1990s were more “rational” and efficient. Horvat’s model failed in practice because the nature and instinct behavior of many people is often driven by egoism, easy benefit at the expense of others even by dishonest and harmful methods, often sanctioned by law. Other sectors of society and state in which decentralization applied such as state security service and the military in which the SFRY was quite efficient, have not been ever thought of as being related to or the results of self-management. Nor has the Yugoslav sports efficiency. This will be proven in section 2.4 about basketball where, what is known as the Yugoslav basketball excellence, based on decentralized self-management whose performance went beyond the geographical and human theory of determination.

3.2. Mobility of players and coaches within the clubs and federal units: In sport, decentralization helped develop local talents and clubs. A centralization was making stronger teams attracting professional players from less developed to more economically advanced republics, or to stronger teams. For example, during the 1980s or the Yugoslav sport golden age, Fadil Vokrri of Pristina moved to Partizan “F” Belgrade, Darko Pančev from Vardar of Skopje, Milko and his brother Boško Gjurovski from Teteks of Tetovo (Macedonia), Dejan Savićević (Montenegro), Safet Sušić (Bosnia-Herzegovina), Refik Šabanadžović (Bosnian Muslim from Montenegro), Robert Prosinečki (Croat from Germany), to Red Star “F” in Belgrade, all of which also played for the Yugoslav National Football Team. The Red Star “F” further attracted Marko Elsner (Slovenian), Siniša Mihajlović (of Serb father and Croatian mother from Croatia), Miodrag Belodedici (defected from Romania in 1988), and Ilija Najdovski (Macedonia). There was fairly limited mobility or transfers of coaches from developed federal units or cities to the clubs in less developed regions, the most notable example of which included “Miroslav “Ćiro” Blažević from Croatia to the football club Pristina (in Kosovo) and that only for one year (in 1985). That is the result of what centralization and a number of authors wanted – attracting the talent from less developed region such as Macedonia, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Montenegro to accumulate them in Belgrade. The main rivals of the Red Star “F” were Dinamo Zagreb, Partizan “F”, and Hajduk Split.

Though football, or soccer as Divac calls it and maintains to be the most popular sport most likely because of its larger number of fans, SFRY was not so successful compared to other sports, both in its first-tier (federal) league and the national team. The best result SFRY football team ever achieved in FIFA World Cup was the fourth place in 1962, and runners-up (second place) in UEFA European Championship in 1960 and 1968. The Yugoslav First Federal Football League generally has not fared well in international competitions. Its best result was in 1966-67 Inter-Cities Fairs Cup (the forerunner of UEFA Cup) by Dinamo Zagreb, and in 1990-91 by the Red Star “F” winning both European Cup (in penalties against Olympique de Marseille in penalties) and Intercontinental Cup. The success story of the Red Star in the final days of Yugoslavia can be attributed to the mobilization of talents from different parts of the country and centralizing them in Belgrade. As the result speaks in itself, it is not so relevant to mention the additional mobility of the players and/or coaches between the football clubs.

Yugoslav football by no means can be compared to the performance of basketball which was more decentralized with strong clubs and the national team. At home, the Yugoslav first tier division had strong competitive clubs such as Cibona, Jugoplastika, Partizan “B”, Zadar, Red Star “B”, Bosna, and Šibenka. Yugoslav basketball was thriving and growing stronger at home, in Europe, and in world competitions. From 1985 to 1991-92, three Yugoslav basketball clubs had won a total of 6 EuroLeague Cups (Jugoplastika 3, Cibona 2, and Partizan “B” 1)³. What made this success was not only the development of local talents but also

³ Jugoplastika in 1990-91 season was known as POP 84. This name was adopted from its sponsor, an Italian clothes company. Today, the club is known as KK Split.

the more spread mobility of players and coaches between the clubs. To mention some of the players as a “labor force” in terms of mobility, they included: Ivo Nakić (Croat) to Partizan “B” in Serbia, Mirko Milićević (Serb) to Cibona in Croatia, Zoran Savić, Zoran Sretenović (Serbs) and Duško Ivanović (Montenegrin) to Jugoplastika in Croatia, and Zufer Avdija (Gorani from Kosovo) to Red Star “B” in Serbia. The head coaches also recorded greater mobility as they had where to go in competitive clubs, such as Dušan “Duda” Ivković (Serbia) to Šibenka (Croatia), Božidar Maljković (Serb from Croatia) to Red Star “B” (Serbia), and Jugoplastika (Croatia), Zoran Slavnić (Serbia) to Šibenka and Jugoplastika (Croatia), and so on. Yet, football remained not only the most popular as a sport but also popular for its negative impacts on politics which overshadowed a small and nearly irrelevant incident in basketball that inspired the story of “Once Brothers.” The true political impact came from football, the cream of which was attracted as centralization in Belgrade, mostly to the Red Star “F” and less to its rival Partizan “F.”

3.3. First sensitive incident – Dinamo of Zagreb versus Red Star “F” of Belgrade: In sports, clashes and incidents between the opposing fans happen very often, especially in football matches that this section will talk about. In addition, violent incidents are commonplace even between the teams in the course of their play or after it almost anywhere. When they happen on a national basis, their implications go beyond sports and courts. As we are talking about sports incidents in former Yugoslavia, let us first refer to incidents in basketball before moving into the one that the title of this subsection refers to.

In 1988, in a semi-final match between Jugoplastika and Partizan “B” (75:73) for the Yugoslav Cup, in Rijeka, a fight between opposing Toni Kukoč and Ivo Nakić occurs. Both were Croats, the former from Split and the latter born in Rijeka but playing for Partizan “B.” Both were dismissed for the incident. As Jugoplastika won, it was to face Cibona of Zagreb. The match was strong until the last seconds when Sretenović with a three-point tied the game at 87:87, then with 11 seconds to go, Dražen Petrović was leading the attack whom Jugoplastika had to guard strongly as he was the main threat scorer. With Dražen almost blocked by two to three players on the left side for a shot, he passes the ball to Zoran Čutura who was open just inside the three-point line to score the leading and winning shot for Cibona with only three seconds remaining. As the bell signaled the end, fighting erupted in the court between the players, in which the coaches Mirko Novosel (Cibona) and Božidar Maljković (a Serb from Croatia, head coach of Jugoplastika) had to intervene and separate their players down from the clash. Although Jugoplastika had Serb players like Savić and Sretenović, it was their Croat teammates Goran Sobin and Velimir Perasović who were exchanging punches with Cibona players. In this case, it was a fight between the Croats in their emotions of joy and sorrow for one side winning the Yugoslav cup and the other side losing it. That was a non-sport behavior but still normal with no consequences beyond ordinary disciplinary commission to sanction the rules of the game and players’ behavior.

In the 1989/90 season, in a match between Jugoplastika and Red Star “B” in Belgrade, Zoran Savić of the former appears to slap in the face Slobodan Janković of the latter team who falls on the floor. Both were Serbs. In another case, Aleksandar Đorđević of Partizan “B” recently has reported an incident he had with Petrović brothers (Aleksandar and Dražen) in a match against Cibona in Zagreb. Đorđević claimed that he was able to fight and beat the Petrović brothers over the play. Dražen would warn him that he will no longer play for the Yugoslav National Basketball Team. Indeed, Đorđević was not invited to the 1989 EuroBasket by the Yugoslavia’s head coach Dušan “Duda” Ivković who was also a Serb. Đorđević explains this as Dražen’s fanatical will for success, numbers, fame, and appearance, and that was the only cause of dispute; otherwise, their relations off the court were good. In general, the incidents in basketball matches were technical or related to the play exclusively, happening between the players of opposing parties which in most cases turned out to be the fight of the same nation (Croats against Croats, and Serbs against Serbs). This is important to remember, because, it contradicts the claims that decentralization in SFRY politics and economics caused fragmentations and the rise of nationalism.

The sport which mostly fueled nationalism was the one most popular – football. The first sensitive incident

with national implications occurred on May 13, 1990, in Zagreb Maksimir stadium in a match between Dinamo Zagreb and Red Star “F” of Belgrade. Unlike in basketball when incidents happened unexpectedly and even the coaches intervene to pacify them, this time not only there was no Mirko Novosel (head coach of Cibona, Croatia) and Božidar Maljković (Serb), but the one who was leading a group of 3 000 Belgrade fans known as “Delije” (Heroes, Braves) into Maksimir was a high profile and international Serb wanted criminal named Željko Ražnjatović – Arkan, wanted by the Interpol⁴. At the time and earlier, the Serbs accounting for 12% of the population made up 40% of the Croatia’s communist party and 60% of police personnel (Tanner, 1990), including the chief of Zagreb police commander, and Dražen’s father Jovan “Jole” Petrović who was the deputy commander of the Šibenik police.

The riots happened three weeks after the first multi-party elections in Croatia which were won by the center-right and conservative Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) led by Franjo Tuđman. Although no one lost the life, the riots resulted in over 60 fans wounded to a variety of wounds including stabs and shots. The “Delije” fans of Red Star “F” clashed with “Bad Blue Boys” of Dinamo began clashing on ethnic hatreds in the city and then intensified in the stadium. The police which initially did not have sufficient forces but later brought in the reinforcements, was generally blamed for being soft towards the violence by the “Delije.” Given that much of the Red Star “F” fans of that event will later fight in the Yugoslav wars with Željko Ražnjatović becoming one of the most known war criminals. That event in Maksimir stadium on ethnic hatreds, would be considered by Fox (2016) after a quarter of century later as the Football Match that Started a War. Certainly, at least this was the linchpin that was not referred to or make the connection to the flag incident three months later in the basketball match for FIBA World Cup in Argentina.

3.4. *Is Yugoslav basketball the evidence of self-management as the most efficient system?:* SFRY was known for its basketball but the rising excellence was getting it from 1974 onwards. It had even earlier won European and World championships. The national team always kept competing in the first three places, and from 1989 to its disintegration in 1991-92, was winning in all international competitions against the strongest national teams such the U.S. and USSR. Table below summarizes the statistics of the SFRY National Basketball Team.

Table 1. Results of the SFRY National Basketball Team in international competitions

Competitions	Appearances	Gold	Sliver	Bronze	Total medals	From 1974-1991
Olympic Games	8	1980	1968, 1976, 1988	1984	5	4
FIBA World Cup	10	1970, 1978, 1990	1963, 1967, 1974	1982, 1986	8	5
FIBA EuroBasket	21	1973, 1975, 1977, 1989, 1991	1961, 1965, 1969, 1971, 1981	1963, 1979, 1987	13	7
Mediterranean Games	11	1959, 1967, 1971, 1975, 1983	1979	1963	7	3
Total	50	14	12	7	33	19
From 1974-1991	-	9	5	5	19	
FIBA’s 50 Greatest All-Time Players (1991): Yugoslavia 12 (24%), USSR 10, Spain 7, Brazil 4, Others 17						

Source: Based on FIBA’s databases selected and grouped by the Author, available at <https://archive.fiba.com/>, accessed on April, 2022.

⁴ Željko Ražnjatović - Arkan (17.04.1952-15.01.2000) was the son of Yugoslav Air Force colonel Veljko (1920-1986) and Slavka Josifović (1925-2012). Arkan’s mother Slavka, as Vaviq (1981) reported, was previously married to Kosovo Albanian fallen and declared national communist hero Meto Bajraktari (1916-1943).

The figures in the last column indicate that the SFRY won majority of the medals from 1974 to 1991, or 19 out of a total 33 in 50 appearances. In all types of competitions, this period brought SFRY 9 out of total 14 gold medals. Broken down by competitions, the best results are recorded in the FIBA World Cup where, from 10 appearances a total of 8 medals were won, of which 5 in 1974-1991 period. The next better success ratio was in Olympic Games winning 5 medals (4 of them from 1976 to 1988) in 8 appearances. As it appears, the numbers tell everything how higher degree of decentralization brought better results in basketball. The numbers also tell a lot about FIBA's 50 Greatest All-Time Basketball Players as of 1991 where, 12 or 24% of them were from SFRY, to be followed by 10 Soviets and 7 Spaniards. But the statistics do not tell the whole story as there is still a lot to be explored inside them.

As already mentioned, SFRY mostly competed for the first three places. It is worth explaining the 1986 Bronze Medal in FIBA World Cup held Spain, the semi-finals match on 17 July in Madrid against the USSR lost in overtime 90:91. SFRY was leading by three points (85:82) with 12 seconds to go and had the ball in possession where Valde Divac makes a double dribbling. This violation gives the Soviets the opportunity to tie the game with a three points, and win it in the overtime. The anxiety by ordinary Yugoslav fans against Divac, especially the Serbs, was: "Taj ciganin nam je izgubio igru" (That gypsy [Vlade Divac] lost us the game). It was by chance and this does happen in basketball. The Soviets in turn lost to the U.S. in finals 85:87, while SFRY won against Brazil for the third place by a landslide 117:91.

Though Yugoslavia's basketball was known to be a strong team in Europe by winning the EuroBasket 1989 and her teams the European cups since 1985, the U.S. got to know this better in the Goodwill Games held in Seattle, Washington, U.S. from 23-30.07.1990⁵. The USSR had already beaten the U.S. by 92:85 but lost to Yugoslavia 84:78. Yugoslavia would then turn to win the finals against the U.S. on 30.07.1990 by 85:79. Analyzing or at least briefly describing that game tells what could happen in forthcoming world competitions, and the American basketball did take a careful note of it. The point was not simply because the U.S. was playing at home in front of its 14 000 fans and referees which certainly was a significant boost for the U.S. team. Looking at the details of the game is more interesting. Yugoslavia was missing the captain Dražen Petrović (point and shooting guard) and Vlade Divac (center). In addition, the Yugoslavs lost in that game Žarko Paspalj (power forward) due to a leg injury after the 8th minute in the first half. Much of the second half went on with Toni Kukoč, Jurij Zdovc (top scorer of the game), Radisav Ćurčić, and Dino Rađa having four personal fouls, with the last two fouled out of the game three minutes before the game ended. Having won with these disadvantages, the Yugoslav national team was promising to deliver even better results when more complete, especially with Dražen and Vlade. It happened as one might have guessed, less than a month later in the 1990 FIBA World Cup. Given that was the event which produced the flag incident, it will be discussed in the following section.

It should be noted that the 1980s were also Yugoslavia's golden age in other sports such as handball and water polo. The Yugoslav national handball team won bronze in world championship in 1970 and 1974, silver in 1982, and gold in 1986. It had also won two gold (1972, 1984) and bronze (1988) in the Summer Olympics. Even better the performance in water polo, winning: Olympic Games (2 gold, 3 silver), World Championship (2 gold, 2 bronze), European Championship (1 gold, 7 silver, 5 bronze), and FINA World Cup (2 gold, 2 silver, 1 bronze). Given the size of SFRY coastline and population, this is an impressive achievement. Local sport talents were advancing in other areas such individual sport, and more or less depending on environment, economic and management conditions, For example, boxing and martial arts in former SFRY were dominated by Albanians. Pristina boxing club won five Yugoslav titles from 1976 to 1984. If Red Star "F" was famous for football, Cibona and Jugoplastika for basketball, Pristina was for boxing. In this way, decentralization and self-management relying on developing local capacities was proven a model than can work in different sport activities.

⁵ Goodwill Games were initiated and created by the American entrepreneur and philanthropist Ted Turner in response to international political tensions during the 1980s and boycotting of Olympic Games between each other by western and eastern Soviet Block communist countries.

Why was the SFRY so successful in basketball at all levels, and how could have that been as a model or lesson in the economy which was performing so poorly and declining? Although these are two different sectors, again, Horvat's theoretical model can explain it if rational decisions are to be made and everyone finds a place or is put in charge of what is capable of. In business and economy, this does not happen for already known reasons except in LMFs to some extent. How and why did it happen in basketball? We can refer to one example. In a 1994 Play Off match between Chicago Bulls and New York Knicks, the latter were closing the lead down to six in the last minute. The last seconds were critical as the Knicks narrowed the lead to two points, and Scottie Pippen of the Bulls trying to delay the game and finish it with that lead, violates that shot code. With 5 seconds remaining, the Knicks tie the game at 102:102. Pippen feeling guilty and fearing that the Bulls may not win the game or lose, asked his head coach Phil Jackson if he wanted him out and bring in someone else. "All right then. Go to the bench", Phil told him and brought in Toni Kukoč instead. With 1.8 seconds remaining, Kukoč fires the winning shot, and the Bulls win. This is what Horvat thought should happen or be applied in business and economy, which rarely or almost never does, and you even face various barriers to be where you want. That is why self-management in economics collapsed, and self-management in sport thrived.

4. Official and alternative version of "Once brothers" documentary

Before going into official and alternative versions of "Once brothers", it is useful to explain to the public when and where it happened that gave rise to the dispute and subsequently broken relations between Dražen Petrović and Vlade Divac. People who are interested in the subject and most basketball players might have an idea that it was all about the Croatian and Yugoslav flags, which indeed it is. The incident happened on 19 August 1990 in Luna Park of Buenos Aires, capital of Argentina, immediately after the finish of the match for the FIBA World Cup golden medal between Yugoslavia and USSR which was won by a large difference of 92:75. Dražen was the captain of the Yugoslav National Basketball Team, who in the last seconds of the game made probably one of the best assists when he received the pass by Obradović from half-court and kicked it behind the back to Toni Kukoč who was underneath the basket but did not expect such a quick assist. Kukoč caught by surprise could not slam the ball in the hole and miss but his co-player of Jugoplastika, Zoran Savić was there to finish the final score. The game was over, Yugoslavia won, and Vlade rushed to hug Dražen to celebrate their best achievement and of their national team – the world champion. The joy was even greater against the team (USSR) as revenge for the narrow loss in the 1986 FIBA World Cup semifinals in Spain lost in overtime by 90:91. This time, Yugoslavia beat the USSR twice in a row within five days (in the run-up on 15 August by even a larger margin of 100:77, and in the finals by a difference of 17 points after eliminating the U.S. in the semi-finals by 99:91). Still within seconds or immediately, a fan appears in front of them with the Croatian flag. Vlade turns the attention to him, grabs the flag, walks in towards the audience, throws the flag down, and comes back to the court with the flag of Yugoslavia. That was the moment which the "Once Brothers" documentary takes as a benchmark of the broken relationship between the two happiest players of the game, Dražen and Vlade respectively.

"Once Brothers" is a documentary film jointly produced by Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN) and NBA Entertainment in 2010, focusing on the relationship between Dražen and Vlade. The documentary includes many participants except the main one (Dražen) who had died in a car crash in Germany on June 07, 1993. A rather superficial view of "Once Brothers" since the incident over the Croatian and Yugoslav flags, maybe a reference to understanding the root of broken relations between Dražen Petrović and Vlade Divac. It may also be quite informative when the documentary says: "Vlade was very emotional, and Dražen was very cold about the subject [the flag incident]." So what is the flag incident really that we already referred to?

The flag incident on August 19, 1990, appears to be small and of no importance whatsoever or silly to cause the separation of brothers. However, Argentina had and still has a large Croat community, much of which had emigrated there by the end of WWII after the Independent State of Croatia led by far-right Ustaše had fallen

and the communist took control of the country. Fearing communist reprisals, which certainly happened, up to 20 000 Croats fled to Argentina, with the Yugoslav government considering them as part of the Ustaše legacy. Over forty years passed until 1990 when the FIBA World Championship was held in Buenos Aires. The Yugoslav basketball team is there, playing in the finals against the USSR. The team is made of Croats, Serbs, Slovenians, and Montenegrins. The Croatian community in Argentina, some of which attended the game, were more emotional towards their Croat players, especially with Dražen as the captain, in part due to their emigration from Croatia which had become part of the communist Yugoslavia to which they were not fond of. The man who appeared with the flag of Croatia on the court was not named publicly for many years. Later, his name emerged only recently as Tomas Šakić, the son of Dinko Šakić (1921-2008) and Nada Luburić (1926-2011). When asked about the incident after a decade the “Once Brothers” documentary was produced, Tomas said the following (Tolić, 2020):

“I cheered for the Croats from the team, Kukoč, Petrović, and Čutura. I thought that Divac was also a Croat, but when he took my flag, I realized that he was a Serb” – Tomas (Dinko) Šakić.

So the son of the most known Ustaše who commanded the Jasenovac concentration camp, the nephew of the Ustaše official managing the system of concentration camps (Vjekoslav “Maks” Ljuburić, 1914-1969) thought of a gypsy-like Divac to be a Croat and wanted to cheer him? If Tomas did not know what the gypsies look like or what nationality Divac was, he could ask his parents (father Dinko, 1921-2008, and mother Nada Ljuburić, 1926-2011 a guardian of women in Stara Gradiška camp) who were well alive in Buenos Aires at the time, if not attending the final match between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union that day in Luna Park, Buenos Aires! Tomas realized that Divac was a Serb only because he took the Croatian flag from him. It could be quite rational if Tomas (Dinko) Šakić would have thought that Dražen Petrović is a Serb, but to mess Vlade Divac with a Serb is unforgiving.

The flag incident did not have any direct impact as Dražen and Vlade only quit talking to each other. At the time, both were playing in the NBA; Dražen for Portland Trail Blazers, and Vlade for Los Angeles Lakers. They kept in touch through phone calls almost every second day. After the flag incident, this was quit. Most who have watched and commented on the movie did not know why Dražen was very cold and Vlade emotional about the subject. If one considers the impact of the Dinamo – Red Star “F” riots three months earlier, then it is easier to understand why the flag incident got so much attention despite not being with any impact in itself. Dražen would not care about it all, but the problem was the politics in his home republic of Croatia. Let us use some important quotes from the documentary produced as directed by Tolajian (2010):

“Me [I] and Žarko were Serbian. Toni, Dino, and Dražen were Croatian...Since he [Dražen] was a kid, all his life was based on basketball; he didn’t know too much about regular life” – Vlade Divac.

“Basketball brought us together but the politicians and the media propaganda tore us apart... The war was created by all sides” – Vlade Divac.

“We did develop that sense of being like a family...With Dražen, basketball was pretty much the only conversation. We will try to move the conversation to something else like music, jokes, this and that, but Dražen would always bring it to basketball” – Toni Kukoč.

“Who cares where is somebody from? We never talked about that; we never asked questions about, not a single one” – Dino Rađa.

Dražen was still with Divac at least in a silent way without talking to each other since the incident with the Croatian flag in Argentina. That was not the case that had severed the relations between Dražen and Vlade, though it was a predecessor which would lead to future incidents between the two, involving not more than a single one to sever the relations forever. As Stojko Vranković, one of Dražen’s best friends reported in an interview with Croatian “Dnevnik”, Dražen had told him about an incident on March 04, 1992, in Los Angeles in the match between Lakers and the Nets. In a duel with Vlade, once Dražen fell on the floor and awaiting a foul, the former went and stomped the latter in the leg. Dražen cursed angrily Vlade, and that was the cause of final quit (Radičević, 2011). This had nothing to do with the politics that Vlade continuously to the present day blamed for his severed relations with Dražen, though one year later, on March 03, 1993, in an interview

with the NBA on TNT sportscaster Ernie Johnson, Dražen himself admits that he still likes Vlade and the fact that they didn't "spoke" [speak] since then [since the flag incident in 1990] was related to politics rather than to anything else. Yes, the flag incident did happen for political motivation but that was inspired by Vlade who would go on to further the nationalist political cause of Serbia with Slobodan Milošević on top of it. Vlade would confirm it long after Dražen tragically passed away. Upon NATO intervention in Kosovo against Milosevic's policy of ethnic cleansing and atrocities against Kosovo Albanians, Vlade the following day (on March 24, 1999) appeared in an interview with Lary King publicly claiming that NATO was wrong. In the question, of whether Milošević was right, Vlade is reluctant to answer properly. His nationalist intentions were being revealed and the incident in Argentina where he tore down the Croatian flag was to be reviewed. And that was the end of his sympathy for the Serb nationalist cause against others, excluding the incident in Los Angeles which "Once brothers" film has missed as the most critical part of the separation between the "brothers." Long after Milošević was toppled from the power, tried and committed suicide at the Hague Tribunal for crimes against humanity in former Yugoslavia, Divac advised Ivica Dačić (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Internal Affairs of Serbia from 2008-2014). Dačić was the right hand of Slobodan Milošević, who is popularly dubbed by opposition political parties as the "Little Sloba", and he is currently the President of the National Assembly of Serbia. This happened at the time (in 2008) of disputed and politicized elections for the head of the Serbian Olympic Committee, which Božidar Maljković called illegal (Čakulović, 2017). In pursuing the "pure" and "apolitical" objectives for the sport, Vlade would confront Maljković and exchange a series of allegations. In this row, Maljković publicly accused Divac of being a big liar and fraudster. The row came after Vlade had complained to the Slovenian media that Slovenia would better keep Jurij Zdovc (Slovenian) as a national coach instead of Maljković (Nikolić, 2011). Yet another evidence that Vlade was campaigning for a national division at the time when the Yugoslav successor states are reestablishing their relations and healing the wounds of the past. Sport, basketball, in particular, was the one keeping the "brothers" together as much as it could. It is still the main driving force to unity, though Vlade advocates for its disunity by campaigning for a division on national prejudices. Politics and the politicians blamed for separating the "brothers" are now better suited concerning basketball across nations than Vlade himself. Furthermore, upon inducted and in his speech to the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 2019, while thanking many of his previous team coaches and players, he did not want to even mention the one that the "Once Brothers" film focused so much attention on him. It was the one with whom Vlade used to be a roommate, won EuroBasket and the FIBA World Cup for Yugoslavia together, talked long hours on the phone every couple of days while in the U.S., and that was his "brother" Dražen Petrović. Vlade considered Dražen as a brother only for political propaganda purposes in the "Once Brothers" film. Now, it is the politicians who have to tell him that your former roommate and "brother", the Mozart of basketball, Dražen, was posthumously enshrined there in 2002 or 17 years before you. If you did not want to thank him, at least you could say in your 2019 speech that Dražen was my "Once Brother" but you deliberately did not.

4.1. The impact on Croatia, Croats, Serbia, and Serbs: The war was not created by all sides but mainly by Serb nationalism under Slobodan Milošević. Vlade never condemned the attack by the Yugoslav Army and Serb paramilitary forces against Šibenik (Dražen's hometown and birthplace) from September 1991 to mid-1995. He wanted Yugoslavia that would almost be fully controlled by the Serb hegemony led by Slobodan Milošević in Belgrade. In case Croatia would not be able to afford such subordination and go for independence, the Serbs would chop out a part of her on behalf of their united Yugoslavia. In 1991, the Serbs accounted for 12.15% of Croatia's total population (Kocsis and Kocsis-Kodosi, 2001). However, they went to control 30% of Croatia's territory and established the Serb Republic of Krajina – RSK (1991-1995) which opposed Croatia's independence. The capital of RSK was Knin, 56 kilometers to the east of Šibenik. The RSK extended control close to Šibenik within a range of artillery fire. And so close to the front line was the distance between the RSK held territories with the city of Zadar, and a bit farther the city of Split to the south as the largest in Dalmatia and second largest in Croatia after the capital city Zagreb. These three coastal cities in Croatia were

vital, guess for what? Basketball. The NBA remembers Šibenik where Dražen was born and Šibenka as his first basketball club. They have heard of Split because that is where Toni Kukoč and Dino Rađa come from, rose to the stars in the last most powerful basketball team of Yugoslavia, Jugoplastika which won twice the Triple Crown during 1989-90 and 1990-91⁶. Further to the north is Zadar, for which Biserka Mikulandra – Petrović (the mother of Dražen) said: “Zadar je grad košarke” (Zadar is the city of basketball) which it was and still is. This area bordering the RSK was just too precious for the legacy of basketball and culture on a global scale, not only for Croatia and the Croats but also for the Serbs. The Serb legendary coach of Jugoplastika, Božidar Maljković, comes from the town of Otočac which became part of the RSK. Another famous Serb coach born in Belgrade but of origin from the same region of RSK, was Dušan “Duda” Ivković (the first cousin of famous inventor Nikola Tesla), former head coach of the Yugoslav National Basketball Team from 1987 that won all top gold in a row (FIBA EuroBasket 1989, 1991 and 1990 FIBA World Cup), Summer Universiade in 1987, and Silver in 1988 Seoul.

Dalmatia was just too precious for the sport of basketball in quality and quantity on a global scale. Why Croatia did not retake eastern Slavonia by force but reintegrated it through peace? It had no importance for basketball, and the Croatian War of Independence was largely for the value of basketball. There was almost nothing important about basketball in eastern Slavonia who retaking control by force during the Croatian War of Independence was abandoned. Military strategists would argue that eastern Slavonia was a flat terrain and bordering Serbia, and that is why it was left out from Operation Storm.

4.2. Similarities rather than the differences as a cause of hatreds and separation: History is full of experience and evidence when differences cause hatreds and wars, as it is also with similarities between the peoples leading to profound consequences. Due to lack of space and nature of this paper, let us refer to some examples when large differences prove a better friendship or brotherhood, and similarities to bitter divisions and harmful consequences. Of course, the cases to be referred to, cannot be generalized. First, let us look at differences.

Austria and Hungary were two separate countries with different nations, Austrian Germans and Hungarians respectively. Hungarian language is totally different from German. Yet, that did not pose any impediment to establish the Austria-Hungary Empire whose half population (50%) was Slavic. Finland with a completely different language never had any problem with the neighboring Sweden, and Norway but the latter two whose languages resemble did. Actually, Swedish, and Norwegian volunteers joined the Finns in the Winter War against the Soviet Union in 1939-40. Bulgaria in WWI did not attack Romania but her fellow Slavic and orthodox Serbia. Former communist Yugoslavia will establish and align herself with African, Arab, and Asian countries in the Non-Aligned movement as an opposition to the Warsaw Pact ruled and dominated by her Slavic fellows, namely the communist Soviet Union. And so on.

National similarities through history have often become the source of bitter conflicts than of those with many differences referred to in the previous paragraph. Former Yugoslavia offers the best experience but let us take more examples before we enter to consider it. Swiss Germans shot down the aircrafts of the Nazi Germany’s Luftwaffe for violating the air space of their state. Turks and Kurds, apart from neighbors, are of the same religion. China and Japan are of the same race having similarities in appearance and cultural history. North and South Korea are one people but the worst enemies between themselves, as there might have been East and West Germany during the Cold War era. India and Pakistani look like a similar race. Russians and Ukrainians have many similarities whose relations at present are aggravated and bitter. And perhaps, the most relevant of all is the similarities between the Slavs in former Yugoslavia. It is here that the similarities became a source of bitter divisions, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. The closer the similarities, the larger the scale of their harmful confrontations than between those with differences. If Serbs and Croats are the same people as Vlade Divac maintains, then it was their similarity which brought the clash and war. A much closer similarity could be observed between Bosnian Muslims, Serbs, and Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Though

⁶ Triple Crown implies the winning of top tier country’s championship, national cup, and European competition during the same season.

the Serbs and Croats from their own perspective think that the Bosniaks are Serbs and/or Croats of different religion, a similar claim as an answer can be made by the Bosniaks – that the Serbs and Croats are Bosniaks of different religion. The founding leaders of the Neo-Nazi Greek political party Golden Dawn are rumored to be of Albanian descent or Arvanitas who promote xenophobia against Albanians. Like Đorđe Petrović, even the Serb war criminal Slobodan Milosevic had his origin from the Vasojevići clan or tribe who engaged in war crimes and ethnic cleansing of Albanians. This underlines the difficulty and controversy in shaping, defining, and understanding a national identity between the three. All of them appear as being one race and having one spoken language, Serbo-Croatian.

Under these similarities of “brotherhood and unity” with many intermarriages, the worst atrocities since WWII would happen. The rest of people having greater national differences such as Slovenians and Slav Macedonians would not be subject to such hatreds, though this cannot be said against Kosovo Albanians as a distinctive people by their language. Even in Kosovo, the hatreds and war occurred more over territorial dispute, out of Serb hegemony and repression respectively. To conclude this section, the question of national identity is more related to administrative state borders, profession, expertise, rather than of language, race, or ancestral heritage.

5. Yugoslav basketball talent lives on scattered

“What a team? What would have happened if we stayed together”, Žarko Paspalj tells Vlade Divac in a basketball hall in Belgrade for the documentary “Once Brothers.” He wanted Dražen Petrović, Toni Kukoč, Dino Rađa, and other Croatian basketball players to be together with him and Vlade in the same national team and state (Yugoslavia) that was being engulfed and ruled by Serbia. The republic which Paspalj came from (Montenegro) as a Serb to play for Partizan “B” in Belgrade, separated from Serbia in 2006 by a referendum vote. It is interesting to note one of the staunchest activists of the pro-independence campaign for Montenegro, was Duško Ivanović, born in Bjelo Polje or next to Plevlje which is the birthplace of Paspalj⁷. Ivanović is a former professional basketball player who played for Jugoplastika along with Kukoč and Rađa. The last match for the last title of the Yugoslav First Basketball League of once brothers occurred between Jugoplastika (then named POP 84) of Split and Partizan “B” of Paspalj. Jugoplastika (among the 12 winning roster, featured two Serbs, the shooting guard Zoran Sretenović and center Zoran Savić). POP 84 won all three games by 3:0 against Partizan “B”, in Split and Belgrade. Former player of Partizan “B”, Vlade Divac was in the NBA at the time.

After disintegration of SFRY, the newly established states went on with their own sport national teams. Although weaker than when they were together, some differences began to emerge. Croatia was seen as a powerhouse of Yugoslavia’s basketball, but as the war goes on there, the performance had switched to Serbia and Montenegro that won two FIBA EuroBasket (1995 and 1997), and two FIBA World Cup (1998 and 2002, which are listed as Yugoslavia’s 5th title, though it involved only Serbia and Montenegro renamed as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia which was formed in 1992 and ended in 2003 with the renaming of State Union of Serbia and Montenegro which lasted until June 2006). On the other hand, the hub of football that we noted earlier as being in Belgrade (Serbia) was performing better in Croatia coming third in 1998 and second in 2018 in the FIFA World Cup, a much better result than of SFRY as a unified team ever achieved.

In addition to the Dinamo – Red Star “F” riots, nationalist feelings were influencing even the Yugoslav National Football Team. In the 1990 FIFA World Cup held in Italy, under political pressure and against his strong will, the head coach Ivica Osim (of German and Czech origin from Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1941-2022)

⁷ The Montenegrin independence referendum was passed by 55.50% of votes on 21 May, 2006. In Bjelo Polje the Yes vote was 55.36%, while in the next northwestern municipality of Plevlje the No vote was as high as 63.36%. We may not speculate of potential reputation and campaign of Duško Ivanović for “Yes” as a Montenegrin and Žarko Paspalj as a Serb for No might have had in the final result. At national level, it appears that the votes of Albanians and Bosniaks in the municipalities of Rožaje (90.79%), Ulcinj (87.64%), and Plav (78.47%) for “Yes” decided final result for Montenegro as an independent state which narrowly passed the required threshold by just 0.5%.

was not allowed to invite in the team Kujtim Shala (an Albanian from Kosovo who played for Dinamo Zagreb) who was one of the top goal scorers in the Yugoslav Football First League. The primary reason of not inviting Shala was the alleged Serb hating of him, which the head coach Ivica Osim publicly denounced such a political interference against professional football players.

The disintegration of the SFRY caused the emigration of many sport talents, but they were already began to emigrate and face new challenges as opportunities in the final years of self-management and SFRY. Not by chance, but basketball was the sport with many talents began to rush abroad. Dražen Petrović was the first who opened the way for the European players in the NBA. Many others, especially from former SFRY followed suit. Until recently, we find the following professional players in the NBA like: Predrag “Peja” Stojaković (Serb of Croatia), Nikola Jokić, Nemanja Bjelica (Serbia), Luka Dončić, Goran Dragić (Slovenia), Bojan Bogdanović, Dario Šarić (Croatia), Nikola Vučević (Montenegro), Jusuf Nurkić (Bosnia-Herzegovina). An experience like the legacy in boxing and martial arts, where the heavyweight European champion Luan Krasniqi in Germany came from Kosovo, and Kosovo’s first won medals in international competitions were in Judo. This may suggest that the sport legacy from former SFRY somehow continues, but more as an export of talent to other countries. Back at home, liberalization or free movement of players made largely a one way – playing abroad. This has led to the decline of local sport performance among the clubs as well as national teams. Famous Yugoslav basketball clubs despite importing many players from abroad are never at the level they used to be without them. Dražen’s Šibenka was dissolved in 2010, while Cibona, Jugoplastika or POP 84 (now KK Split), Partizan “B”, and Red Star “B” continue to be in business but have forgotten what winning the EuroLeague title means since then. Not only these historical clubs, but also the newly established ones from the successor states of former Yugoslavia could ever match the success in international competitions of those that were based on the model of decentralization and self-management to develop local capacities. This highlights the superiority of self-management model bringing about stronger competition, better performance, and greater common good. It was applied, had its lifetime, worked, and was given up when it got mismanaged. Besides the economy and more in sports with the best results recorded in basketball, the self-management kept the population within the country relying on their resources and management for development. When competition in basketball at home became sufficient and was exposed to the outside world, it challenged even the strongest league in the world – the NBA and the U.S. National Basketball Team. The Yugoslav talented players continued to pour into the NBA to the present day by making it stronger, though back to their homes in Europe, the clubs of their countries, despite globalization and the arrival of some American players, strive to remain financially alive. In this respect, globalization through centralism empowered the NBA by attracting talents and impoverishing basketball clubs in the countries where skilled players come from. Without strong competitive clubs like the ones in SFRY during the 1980s, the national teams are also weaker. A similar story is evolving in the economy by brain drain and massive emigration of the people. The NBA itself is a global economy in a monopoly position with almost no competition outside the U.S. From a mainstream economic theory, the U.S. economy faces competition both in terms of its size, and more from smaller developed countries. Such competition has made American companies (and of many other developed countries) open their affiliations for operations in different parts of the world through capital and labor mobility. But this does not apply to basketball, the cream of which is being attracted to many NBA competitive teams in the U.S.

6. Conclusions

In theory, the self-management model as developed by Horvat (1982) was to be the most efficient and socially-accepted economic model. It failed in the economy but succeeded in being very efficient in sports, basketball in particular. Interesting, the more the economic crisis deepened, the stronger the Yugoslav basketball was becoming by overrunning competition in Europe and the World. Self-management was primarily meant to bring order and prosperity to politics and economics. It achieved considerable success by transforming Yugoslavia from a largely rural and agricultural society into a more modern and industrialized country. It was

also a model that allowed greater freedom and democracy than any other communist country. National identities have always been a controversial and complicated issue in Yugoslavia. The multinational state was formed on two almost equal sizes of what once used to be the division between the Eastern and Western Roman Empire, which was also the place where the Great Schism drew the line in 1054 by making those West Roman Catholics and East as Orthodox Christians. In the course of history, many people of different races, religions, and nationalities will cross this border and get assimilated into certain nations and nationalities. Although a unified state and with the major language being Serbo-Croatian, many legacies from the past left a strong impact. Self-management socialism sought to alleviate or merge these differences, and that is why we were witnessing a rising number of people who wanted to identify their national affiliation simply as Yugoslavs, with the official motto of “brotherhood and unity.” The sport was almost the main activity that brought the people even closer between the nations and nationalities. For how much longer? For as long as political and economic stability allowed.

Although a one-party system, the politics in Yugoslavia was more liberal and decentralized. And so was the economics through self-management the success story lasted until 1980. By all accounts, the self-management socialism in Yugoslavia recorded a better economic performance not only compared to centralized communist states but for some time (1952-1965) even against capitalist counterparts. Decentralization in the medium to long run by utilizing local resources and capacities proved efficient until the working discipline eroded considerably. This gave rise to declining output, rising unemployment, and hyperinflation until the disintegration of Yugoslavia. One hypothetical explanation for the shining sport and economic decline during the 1980s can probably be related to the unemployed youth who in absence of finding a job in the social sector of the economy, went on to deal with sport and entertainment, especially in those areas that they felt better prepared for, or had the nearest opportunity for a certain one. The more this tendency of rising unemployment and increased sports activities led to stronger competition in the latter which Yugoslavia’s GMP or the social product did not include as a productive activity. The 1980s was also Yugoslavia’s golden age in music and entertainment activities. There is, however, an argument that stands against this inverse relationship between economic decline and shining sport. If we consider basketball, Yugoslavia was known for it even earlier, and from 1974 onwards it only got stronger thanks to decentralization and self-management.

Based on geographical and human conditions, the Yugoslav sport like economics relied on utilizing and developing local capacities. It recorded international success in water polo, handball, and best of all, basketball. However, a poorer performance is witnessed in the most popular sport in Europe – football. This one which somehow developed contrary to basketball became also the source of nationalist sentiments culminating in the Dinamo-Red Star “F” riots. Nearly three months later, the flag incident in the 1990 FIBA World Cup happened. “Once Brothers” documentary and its commentators rightly assess the incident as not with any serious impact, though they fail to consider how sensitive it was because of the riots in a football match a few months earlier. Basketball brought professionals together, but the most popular sport in Europe and SFRY (football) and the Serb nationalist hegemony tore the “brothers” apart. The brothers broke their relationship more because of similarities rather than differences. Dražen Petrović and Vlade Divac were brothers in the profession but not in national identity. Vlade wanted to save the friendship with Dražen while the Yugoslav Army and the Serb paramilitaries were shelling Dražen’s Šibenik (also home to Šibenka, Dražen’s debuting basketball club) and were fighting the Croats close to Dino Rađa’s and Toni Kukoč’s city of Split – the powerhouse of Jugoplastika. Spending 8 hours a day in the gym while in the NBA, tells that the true national identity and life of Dražen Petrović was basketball. He was never “smart” like Vlade Divac who later went on in supporting and advising the “Great Sloba” (Slobodan Milošević) and the “Little Sloba” (Ivica Dačić) in crimes against humanity. This made Dražen and Vlade never brothers but eternal enemies. The brothers separated mainly because they could not resolve their similarities rather than differences. Anything activity can bring the people together and make them brothers in interests, such as business, science and research, criminal activities, and not only basketball. Once you are in certain activity working together for a common good or victory, you are a brother with the rest of the team members. Once the team is dissolved, the friendship can be maintained but to the extent of

“brothers”, it used to be. By this token, “Once Brothers” centered on national identity and the same language, is not so relevant. Michael Jackson (1958-2009) was an American pop star of African origin. The person with the same name (Michael Jackson, 1944 -) is a retired British army general. Americans and British are one people, you know! Same culture, the same language (with less difference than Serbian and Croatian), same names, same last names, or better saying the same by their first, middle, and last names to the extent that no one can see any difference, except in their race and citizenship. That was a kind of “similarity” between Dražen Petrović and Vlade Divac.

To conclude, Horvat did answer Hayek and the rest of the world in theory, though the complex reality refuted this in politics and economics. The model was and is still the most effective one depending on the degree of implementation. Basketball provided the best answer to Hayek about how self-management can be the best and most efficient model, even if some physical features of the people were inferior to the Negro NBA players. The Yugoslav players proved their talents both as individuals and on national teams, which in part is the merit of the self-management model. Get Scottie Pippen out, and bring Toni Kukoč instead to win the game. That is how self-management would efficiently work in business and the economy if properly implemented, which unfortunately it is hard. Basketball is an entertainment integral part not only of culture or spiritual beliefs like brotherhood and unity as self-management viewed it, but also of business, economics, and national economy. The downfall of SFRY came from mismanagement of the economy, and the brothers in basketball could never save their country from collapse and disintegration.

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