

MILJENKO DERETA (1950–2014)

IN MEMORIAM

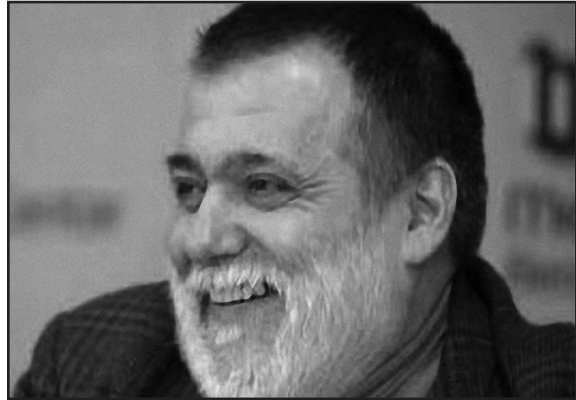
It was with great sadness that we learned of Miljenko Dereta's death on November 3, 2014, just one month after his participation in IDEE's seminar, "25 Years After 1989."

Miljenko Dereta was among Serbia's most recognized civic leaders, first as a determined opponent of the Serbian dictator Slobodan Milošević and the murderous wars he carried out and then as the founder and long-time director of Civic Initiatives, based in Belgrade. He played a key role in mobilizing citizens to overthrow Milošević, in building civic institutions that could last, in mentoring youth and civic leaders, and in fostering civic education as a means of instilling democratic values in the next generations. Miljenko Dereta was also a founder and leading member of the Social Democratic Union, a member of parliament as part of a liberal coalition (in 2012–13), and a well known commentator on political affairs in independent media.

Miljenko Dereta was among the region's most effective and respected proponents of civil society and democracy. For him, supporting democracy never stopped at the border's edge. He was engaged in many European institutions with the aim of cutting through bureaucratic mindsets and getting assistance to flow to civic forces throughout the region that could do the most effective work (sometimes successfully, but not often, as he reported). He was an essential member of IDEE's Centers for Pluralism, through which he participated in numerous human rights and democracy campaigns and advised many activists in other countries.

Miljenko Dereta was an unusual person on the Serbian political and civic scene, indeed in all of the post-communist countries. At a time when Serbia was in the firm grip of chauvinist nationalism and cultural atavism, he championed cosmopolitanism, Western democracy, and political liberalism. At a time when political liberalism was equated with economic liberalism and free market capitalism, he identified with the European tradition of social democracy. But mostly, in a period when his country was in the grip of a repressive state and paramilitary thugs, when ethnic massacres and street kidnappings were daily news stories, when the economy had spiraled downward to put most people in physical and emotional despair, and when even opponents of Milošević had adopted a hard, cynical cast of spirit in which betrayal was common and loyalty was rare, Miljenko insisted on creating a world based on humanity. His belief in democracy was not simply a preferred philosophy but also a personal and moral creed that governed both his political and personal relationships. The simple human values of dignity, honor, respect for others, and personal trust were paramount in his worldview.

Miljenko was also our very close friend whom all the participants in IDEE's Seminar will miss dearly. His death at the too-early age of 65 has left a void that cannot be filled. But his work, we hope, will live on through the lasting influence he had on civic and political life in Serbia and beyond. He inspired us and many others with his words and his actions.



ERIC CHENOWETH AND IRENA LASOTA

Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe (IDEE)

The Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe (IDEE) is an independent organization dedicated to the active promotion of democracy, civil society, and human rights throughout Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and other communist or post-communist countries. IDEE also seeks to share the varied experiences of democratic movements and the transitions from communism in Eastern Europe with political and human rights movements seeking democratic change in other parts of the world.

The Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe (IDEE) was formed in 1985 by the Committee in Support of Solidarity—started in December 1981 to aid Poland’s Solidarity movement after the imposition of martial law—in order to help the growing democracy and human rights movements in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. IDEE organized substantial assistance to opposition groups at the forefront of the 1989–91 revolutions that brought about the fall of communism in the region. Since 1989, it has helped democrats in the region to overcome communism’s legacy, build democratic institutions, and oppose new forms of authoritarianism. Over 30 years, IDEE has organized programs that have reached all thirty former communist countries as well as Cuba, including direct help to more than 3,000 independent publications, civic, trade union, and human rights organizations, citizens’ initiatives, and opposition movements. IDEE has also shared its experiences with democratic and civic activists from many other countries.

In 1992, IDEE created the Centers for Pluralism, a lasting regional network of democratic activists from twenty-four post-communist countries having the aims of consolidating and expanding liberal democracy throughout the region and of sharing the varied experiences of the transitions from communism with themselves and those seeking democratic change in other countries. IDEE has also organized international election monitoring missions to numerous countries, including Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Georgia.

From 1988 to 1997 (nine volumes, thirty-four issues), IDEE published *Uncaptive Minds*, a journal of information and analysis on Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. It is the most comprehensive journal from this period **about** the transition from communism in Eastern Europe that was written **by** those in the region bringing about democratic change. A special issue marking the 25th anniversary of the 1989 revolutions, “Reflections on Unfinished Revolutions,” includes many contributors to the earlier publication.

For more information about IDEE, see its new web site, www.idee-us.org as well as www.idee.org, which maintains the archive of online materials posted by IDEE from 1998 to 2014. Or contact:

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