Stevan Dedijer –
My Life of Curiosity and Insights
A Chronicle of the 20th Century

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&
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NORDIC ACADEMIC PRESS
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Stevan Dedijer was a remarkable man, as I guess that everyone who ever met him could confirm. Just for a start, take the appearance – or rather non-appearance – of the desk in his permanent or temporary office. Some professors have huge stacks of papers on their desks, but Stevan had a pile, one single impressive hill of sheets shaped by the laws of Newtonian physics, the interrelationship between gravity and friction. Your first impression when entering the office was that of total disorder. But the first impression was, as often, misleading. What struck the newcomer as chaos was in fact an efficient and functioning filing system, though perhaps not in the conventional sense of the word. But then again, Stevan himself was not particularly conventional, neither as a person nor in his thinking. And he did find the papers he was looking for, going for the right section and digging down to the right layer, and suddenly producing the letter he had just mentioned from General Maxwell Taylor, starting with ‘Dear Steve’.

This was in 1977 and I had just met the professor who in the long run would mean the most to me academically, since I ended up being a professor in the subject he had invented and serving at the very institute that he had founded a decade earlier in 1966, the Research Policy Program, later renamed the Research Policy Institute when it was established as a more permanent cross-disciplinary unit at Lund University.

Stevan Dedijer, as I immediately became aware of, was a man of considerable if not limitless curiosity. Central to his work, his reading and vast correspondence, was a concept of what he called social intelligence: the ability of individuals and organizations to orientate in an increasingly complex information environment. Stevan foresaw the coming of an age where individuals and organizations alike would become dependent on this ability to collect, process and use
information and the immense challenge of a coming information explosion. Stevan’s work in the field of social intelligence made him one of the pioneers and inspirers of the development of business intelligence, relying on the increasing availability of information from open sources. I think it is fair to say that Stevan Dedijer ‘invented’ social intelligence by identifying and giving a name to a general social phenomenon, known and practiced throughout human history and rapidly being transformed through the impact of technological change, scientific research and globalization.

Stevan was a man with many qualities. One of them was that he was aware of his limitations. He was not a skilful academic entrepreneur and never bothered to master the intricate codes of Swedish academic culture. His straightforward way won him friends, but also created enemies. And not everyone grasped the purpose of or academic relevance of a concept as broad as social intelligence.

Stevan never wrote the great standard work on his invention, social intelligence, I think for much the same reasons that he never completed his autobiography (see the preface by Carin Dedijer). His concept of social intelligence was never and could never be completed; it was an ongoing, never-ending intellectual process as displayed in this book. I recall that he once a few years after we met commented on the task of writing monographs, standard works, and textbooks. That was for others to do, he explained, those who followed and picked up the ideas and concepts he had left along the path. ‘I’m the point of a patrol’, he declared, referring to his time as a US Army paratrooper during the Second World War. As in the field, he would run ahead of the main force as a lookout for anything suspicious. But he was only the scout: it was for the main force to investigate more closely what he had found, to do the mopping up of normal science described by Thomas S. Kuhn. This was not said in an arrogant way; on the contrary, it was a frank statement of considerable self-insight.

As we all know old soldiers never die, they just fade away. And old professors never quit, they just carry on. Stevan continued to be active in the true sense of the word, unaware of the literal meaning of retirement. And in a way, he is still around. His concept of social intelligence is more relevant today than ever. And the Dedijer
FOREWORD

collection of the Lund University Library still contains a unique spectrum of literature on all aspects of intelligence. Opening some of the books, you are likely to find Stevan’s numerous, sometimes massive, underlining and his personal comments, frank as always, as advice or hints for future readers. A message from the point of the patrol.

It is a privilege for the Research Policy Institute and for me personally to participate in the posthumous publication of this long-awaited autobiography, finally compiled through the effort of Stevan’s wife, Carin Dedijer, and their youngest son Miki Dedijer.

On a more formal level I should add that some footnotes with references appear in the original manuscript, while others have been added in the final editing, along with a few explanatory notes, added by Carin Dedijer (C.D.) and myself (W.A.).

Wilhelm Agrell
Professor in Intelligence Analysis and Deputy Director of the Research Policy Institute, Lund University, Sweden
Preface

On June 18, 2004, a memorial ceremony, ‘Komemoracija’, was held for Stevan Dedijer at the ancient Sponza Palace, generously made available by the City of Dubrovnik. Stevan’s daughter Danica read ‘L’Infinito’ by Leopardi, a poem that had occupied Stevan’s mind in his last few months, and our son Miki gave a long, beautiful speech about his father.

Two weeks earlier, Stevan and I had boarded a plane from Malmö to Dubrovnik. I had brought him directly from the hospital in Lund, where he had spent the last few months in the oncology clinic. His mind and spirit were as alert as ever in his 93rd year but his body was giving up. Stevan’s ardent wish was to come back to his home country, as he realized his life would soon be over. Everybody – doctors, family, friends – was strongly against moving him in his weakened condition, but as I saw him getting more and more despondent I finally made my decision: I would help him to return to his other home in Dubrovnik. We both knew that he would never see Sweden again.

At Dubrovnik airport an ambulance stood by the plane to bring Stevan to the taxi awaiting us. Up in the hills above the Old Town, a steep, narrow, winding flight of steps led down to his apartment. The night around us with its heavy scent of pine was completely dark. With the help of his taxi driver-friend, Ante, who almost had to carry him down, he managed after a long, exhausting descent to reach his apartment, where his daughter Danica was awaiting us.

In his apartment overlooking the Adriatic and the ancient stone walls of the Old Town, he spent the days lying on the couch, telephone in hand, in constant communication with friends in Croatia and Sweden. His intellect as sharp as always, he dictated notes and letters to his secretary, made and received numerous telephone calls and was interviewed daily by a journalist who was writing a book.
about his mother. There was a lot of commotion in the apartment: many friends visited, there was animated talk, lively discussions and laughter; a warm happy atmosphere.

After one week he died at home, my hand in his. At his bedside he had asked to have a photo of his younger daughter Lada, who had died a few years earlier.

Stevan had been my husband and life companion for 42 years.

In 1961, I was a young language student living at the International Student House in Lund. At that time, Stevan lived in a small furnished room in Copenhagen. He had just been allowed to leave Yugoslavia after six years in Zagreb without a passport and without employment; an ‘internal émigré’ as he called himself. His departure was made possible only through the intervention of the physics professors Niels Bohr in Copenhagen and Torsten Gustafson in Lund, who had issued a formal invitation for Stevan to conduct research at the Niels Bohr Institute.

One day in the same year Stevan came to the International Student House to visit a physicist colleague. He saw me in the reception and then began a period of intense courtship. Stevan struck me as a charming and lively man, full of enthusiasm and joy despite his difficult situation with an insecure future and meager financial support.

A year later we were married.

Stevan moved to Lund and, again with the support of Professor Torsten Gustafson, gradually began to develop his new research subject in the university. He was then 51 years old. His two daughters by his second wife Ivanka, Danica and Lada, lived in Yugoslavia with their mother.

We began our marriage by spending two months in Calcutta where Stevan had been invited by Professor Mahalanobis to work at the Indian Statistical Institute. In 1963, I accompanied him when he was invited to lecture and carry out research at the universities of Yale and Harvard and again to Yale University in 1965. At that time I was a translator of Russian texts.

After our two sons Jevto and Miki were born in 1963 and 1965 I could not travel with Stevan so much. However, in 1969 we lived for a year with our boys and Stevan’s daughter Lada in Palo Alto, California, where he had been invited to the Center for Advanced
Studies of Behavioral Sciences at Stanford. In 1972, when Stevan was a visiting professor at Dartmouth College, N.H, we all came with him. In 1979–80 we spent a year in Paris where Stevan had been invited by the OECD to do research and the boys attended a French school. By that time I had become a psychologist.

This exposure to international environments and American and French schools expanded the world of our sons and probably influenced them to study and live abroad as young men.

Jevto became so enthusiastic about France that he later went to live and work in Paris and married a beautiful French girl, Yolaine. Miki obtained scholarships to study at Milton Academy, Massachusetts, and later at his father’s university, Princeton, from which he graduated with a major in biology.

Stevan continued to stay in close contact with Yugoslavia, reclaimed his Yugoslav and later Croatian citizenship and kept in continuous touch with his large network of Yugoslav friends, colleagues and political connections.

Every summer we would go on vacation to the little fishing village of Trsteno near Dubrovnik that Stevan had discovered when he lived in Zagreb. There he would get up early in the morning and sit with his typewriter by a stone table to work for several hours in the cool green shade of the trees in the botanical garden, the Arboretum. We used to stay by the harbor in the beautiful Villa Aurora, an old stone palace covered in red bougainvilleas. When we revisited Trsteno in 2001 a large part of the Arboretum had been burnt down by Serb artillery in the so called ‘civil war’ of the 1990s, most of the interior of Villa Aurora had been destroyed, and its exterior partly ruined by Serb occupying soldiers.

In 1976 we all went on a strenuous camping tour in the wild mountainous forest of Bosnia, Sutjeska, one of the last two remaining primeval forests in Europe. This was the area where the partisans, with Stevan’s brother Vladimir and his wife Olga, had fought the Germans during the war. Olga died there after having been wounded in battle and her name is inscribed on a large wall in Tjentishte along with all the hundreds of partisans killed. This is also the place where Stevan’s father Jevto herded sheep as a child.

The area held special significance for Stevan, so much so that
he wrote in his last will that he wanted his ashes to be spread near Trnovachko Jezero, the ‘Thorn Lake’, between the mountains of Voljuvak, ‘Wolf Mountain’, and Maglich in the Sutjeska forest.

In October 2006, his children Danica, Jevto and Miki and I carried out his last wish. We set off for another camping expedition to Sutjeska, now a national park, to spread his ashes on a plateau between the mountains as he had directed. As we did so in the cold, bleak rain over the clouded mountain tops, two ravens flew across the sky. We felt this was an eerie coincidence as Stevan had chosen for his ex libris the two ravens Hugin and Munin, Thought and Memory. In Nordic mythology they serve as Odin’s informers or ‘intelligencers’.

Early in our marriage Stevan would often mention that he was going to write his autobiography. Now and then over the years he presented me and the boys with short papers about his life for comments. However, he was so busy developing the Research Policy Institute, traveling, lecturing, teaching and publishing, that he did not find much time or summon concentration enough to look backwards into his past.

After his official retirement from the university in 1978 he continued with unflagging enthusiasm to develop and expand his new research field of ‘social intelligence’. At this time his autobiographical writings began to take shape. Didrik Hamilton, former head of the SE-bank in Geneva, became his great supporter in this effort and assisted him in every way. Thanks to his generosity it was possible for Stevan to, for example, buy a new computer and to employ a part-time secretary in Dubrovnik during his last few years.

After Stevan obtained an apartment in Dubrovnik in 1987 and then moved permanently there in the early 1990s, his main aim was to concentrate on writing about his life. However, he continued to be involved with the political situation in his homeland. As a Serb living in Croatia he courageously took an official stand in the Croatian press and television against the ‘Great Serbia’ nationalist ideas of Milosevic and the ethnic cleansing of Muslims in Bosnia and Kosovo. He also continued to develop his pioneering ‘intelligence’ subject, writing, lecturing and traveling extensively. In this way he remained an active participant in the ongoing affairs of the world and found little time for introspection.
After his death we found a large number of files in his computer and a number of disks, all containing chapters, outlines or notes for his autobiography. Some were written as early as the 1970s and the last ones the same year he died. Many chapters had been written and rewritten several times in the course of the years and had several versions. Large parts of the texts had been changed, moved or deleted by Stevan and new thoughts, memories and ideas had been added to later versions. Most of the files were written by Stevan himself directly on his computer, but because of failing eyesight in his old age several of the later texts were difficult to ‘decipher’ and clarify.

Our son Miki, a science journalist, interviewed and worked with Stevan on his autobiography during a brief period in the 1990s. Several of the earlier chapters were edited by him in close collaboration with his father and needed no further work.

It became a long and painstaking task for me to put together Stevan’s writings posthumously into a more or less complete autobiography. Some incomplete chapters have been left out altogether. Earlier versions of the same chapter were usually more relevant and detailed and have been partly incorporated into the more recent ones.

The chapter ‘All Autobiographers are Liars’ and the two last chapters of this book have been reconstructed and compiled by me from several different texts written during the past 20–30 years of his life.

Stevan’s account of his childhood and life as a young man and more remote events appear to have remained more vividly in his memory than the more recent decades of his life. There are no accounts of his four children or his role as a father, although he was a devoted and loving one. The second last chapter, however, is dedicated to his children. We are given only a brief insight into his first marriage with Dolly in Pittsburgh through an emotionally charged event, and his second marriage to his Croatian wife Ivanka in Yugoslavia is described through a similarly dramatic event. These were episodes that preceded the break-up of both marriages.

Going through all this wealth of material about my husband’s life and ideas after his death has been a work of love, mourning and closure as well as a revelation. I have come to realize that I did not know much about the life he had before we met. Sometimes I have been surprised, upset or angry to find out about things he
did not tell me, touched to read about the earlier traumatic events in his life and sad not to be able to talk to him about them. His spiritual-religious development from ‘agnostic materialism’ through communism to deism was largely unknown to me.

It is my hope that this account of a man whose life history mirrors that of the whole twentieth century will be a source of inspiration to his children and grandchildren, to his friends and colleagues, to historians of the twentieth century and to other readers. It certainly was for me.

Carin Dedijer
Lund, Sweden
All Autobiographers are Liars

‘When I look back from this high hill of my old age…’
Black Elk, Oglala Sioux chief

The coming-to-be of each unique selfhood lies beyond the field of scientific enquiry. It is my thesis that we have to recognize the unique selfhood as being the result of a supernatural creation of which in the religious sense is called a soul.

John C. Eccles, The Human Mystery, 1979

This is my report on my last research problem. I am starting perhaps the most challenging and difficult task I have attacked in my 90 years of life.

When I left communist Yugoslavia in 1961 to work at the Niels Bohr Institute of Theoretical Physics in Denmark, everyone started telling me I must write the story of my life, my autobiography. Professor Edward Shils of Chicago and Cambridge Universities, Edward Wilson, author of the biography of D. Diderot, and many others found my life fascinating and urged me to describe it. In 1970 the New York Times correspondent Cy Sulzberger, who wrote three articles about my first Open University study of government and other forms of intelligence, came from Paris to Lund to interview me about my life for a biography.

In 1992, a Festschrift was published, written by a dozen people from all parts of the world.¹ In this book Mats Carlson wrote an article entitled: ‘Stevan Dedijer: The World Jumper’, saying:

If Stevan Dedijer were to write a book about his life, it would probably be a bestseller and certainly a most interesting screenplay subject for movie and television producers. His life is a cavalcade
through the 20th century history of Europe and America. He seems to have a special knack for being on the spot when the most significant events take place.

People found my life interesting, because since my birth in Sarajevo in 1911 I have lived intensely, changing countries, cultures, languages, ideologies, beliefs, professions and families.

From birth I have been an active participant in the rapid and total global changes revolutionizing everything on our planet. The same month I was born in June 1911, Rutherford discovered the nucleus of the atom. Thirty-five years later the first nuclear bombs killed in two flashes 200,000 human beings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Five years later I was engaged for four years in trying to make a nuclear bomb for Tito. Today ten states have at their disposal more than about 20,000 nuclear bombs.

From 1911 to 1995 I have been in all kinds of wars. At four months of age I was a refugee, my family being involved in the First World War, the ‘Great War’. I was an active soldier in World War II in the most dangerous branch, the paratroopers. I was a political activist and an engaged observer midst fighting in former Yugoslavia from 1991 to 1995.

From a follower of Karl Marx I became a follower of Groucho Marx’s science: ‘Whatever it is, I am against it!’ I have been a global whistleblower. ‘Whistleblowers require an extraordinary tenacity and courage to uncover secrets that governments and corporations are determined to hide’, as Chow Hou Wee described it.²

Throughout my 90 years I have been busy with immense energy in the Balkans, in America, Sweden, India and half a dozen other countries pursuing my more or less crazy dreams. All the time I have been extremely curious about everything from the cosmos, the weightless, point-like neutrino particle and about human beings as individuals, groups and species; everything except about myself. I never thought to ask myself who I am.

My life has been so closely involved with the main events of this century that it could almost be seen as the history of the century.

Because of my life without roots in any specific, national culture, I perceived early on with a growing conviction that our century
is a time of permanent and rapid evolution. Bellamy in his *Looking Backward*, written in 1887, saw our century, just as I do, as a time of unparalleled social progress.3 ‘It seems to me that nowhere can we find more solid ground for daring anticipation of human development during the next one thousand years than by “looking backward” upon the progress of the last one hundred years’ (quoted from Bellamy’s Introduction, written in 1887). For me this describes the century in which I lived and some features which Bellamy foresaw clearly.

In the year 2001, everything around us, all the roughly one hundred ‘cultural universals’, as sociologists call them, from values to technology and style of work, are changing so rapidly that in one way or another everyone is asking themselves such questions. Before the 1960s I was aware of the Heraclitus ‘panta rei’ (‘everything changes’) concept. In the 1960s I changed it to ‘panta rei tahiteron’, that is ‘everything changes quicker’.

No smart PhD has as yet invented a small set of interacting indicators to describe these revolutionary changes in human society. We are informed, consciously or not, of these changes every time we look at the TV, listen to the radio, talk to other people, and use the mass media or a book.

How would I describe my life that people told me was unusual? Two impulses helped me to start. The first was that my Swedish wife, Carin, kept telling me: ‘You don’t know yourself, Stevo! Try to find who you are.’ The second stimulus to ask myself about myself was the impact of the rapidly changing world around me. My approach is to report on what I perceived in my 90 years of life about humanity, every one of its organizations and individuals, including myself, in a world we did not create, but which we have changed and are changing. I now believe that I perceive the direction of the rapidly accelerating changes all of us are noting around us. This insight is a hopeful one.

To understand the ‘impossible’ task of describing my own life, to gain some experience of how to do it, I read dozens of autobiographies, starting with that of Saint Augustine written about 400 A.D., which I had read already as a boy in Italy, as well as Plutarch’s *Lives of prominent Romans and Greeks*. I read the autobiographies of
Cellini and G. Cardano in the Renaissance and Rousseau’s in the eighteenth century, as well as those of Bertrand Russell and Richard Feynman in the twentieth century. Rousseau wanted to write such an autobiography that when he appeared before Saint Peter with his life story in hand, Saint Peter would say: ‘You described your life exactly as it was’. I also read a number of biographies: Talleyrand, Fouché, Louis XI, Elisabeth I, Diderot, and several biographies of Churchill, as well as his autobiography of when he was a young man.

The physicist Feynman’s rule of being honest with oneself will guide me. Each life story is based on a specific approach to oneself, to the people one has interacted with, to humanity in general and to the universe we live in. St Augustine’s approach in his *Confessions* was religious, assuming that God rules the world. Cardan looked critically at the basic traits of his personality; Cellini was an artist and he described the artistic life of his own time in the Renaissance; Russell was a philosopher and described it from this approach. With Rousseau and Szilard I shall write a ‘Saint Peter story’ of my life so that no single team of researchers or writers could describe it more objectively.

Every autobiography is based on a very limited number of remembered events against the background of innumerable ‘forgottens’. From all my reading of biographies and autobiographies I concluded that all autobiographers are in a sense ‘liars’.

I know from my own life that 99.99 % of the information we have received through our senses is forgotten and leaves no trace in our thinking brain. Autobiographies record events we remember, but most events and thoughts in our life we forget. I discovered that I had lived through events which I have totally forgotten. Thus, my mother writes in her memoirs that in 1914 she was running with me in her arms through the town of Belgrade when it was being bombed by the cannons of the Austrian army and that we found refuge in the Belgrade train station. Of all this I have no memory whatsoever – a total ‘forgotten’. I also forgot thousands of people I lived with intimately: my family, my classmates I spent 18 years with, fellow workers in a number of workplaces and soldiers I trained with in various places and then became a member of the same division in the war against the Nazis.
A surprising assessment made of me by a Lund professor: ‘Stevan, are you still provoking and teasing people?’ made me ask about 15 individuals who knew me to write an assessment of my basic traits as if I would never read it myself. The most perceptive of the answers to my query came from Milovan Djilas from Montenegro, one of Tito’s closest collaborators among the leaders of the Yugoslav Communist Party in the war and during Tito’s regime. In 1953 he had led a handful of us in Yugoslavia to carry out an intellectual revolt against the communist regime and work for democracy. He wrote his famous *The New Class* about communism, which have appeared in all former communist countries from Croatia to China. In his assessment of me, he first saw something I was very vaguely aware of myself:

I would say that Stevo is decisively more tied to his father, although he hardly remembers him. I believe that his heritage from his father has a stronger influence on him than that from his mother. I knew his mother, Majka Mi as we called her, very well as a dynamic, enterprising authoritative Belgrade lady. Her energetic, proud gait impressed me since I first saw her in the streets of Belgrade in the 1930s, even before I knew who she was. The Communist Party leadership of Yugoslavia neglected and underestimated Stevo both as a scientist and as a member of a political cadre. They ‘discovered’ Stevo only in 1949, when things started going badly at our Nuclear Centre in Vincha. Until then he was working as a journalist on tasks below his true capability. For this ‘undervaluation’ not only the Party was to ‘blame’ but also Stevan himself. In his nature, there was something non-aggressive. [Just as Mother told me about my father – S.D.] There was in him a certain readiness to sacrifice himself, to accept any tasks the Party laid upon him. In other words his own conscience and awareness of those revolutionary times made him accept and carry out such tasks.

As I have been all my life, I am still at 91 a ‘world jumper’. Looking at my life I discovered that at least 14 times I had suddenly made decisive life changes. (See ‘My Life-Changing Decisions’.) All this ‘jumping’ of mine was, I realize now, caused by my first insight, ‘Beitul’, the Hebrew principle of living for goals always above one’s
private interests. Only recently have I begun to see that every one of my ‘experimental jumps’ had unpleasant and hard consequences for my family, wives, children, and colleagues who wanted to collaborate with me. This happened with my wife Ivanka, when I was asked to engage in ‘Tito’s atom bomb project’, as I called it. She begged me: ‘Please, let us not do that! You have a good job. Why change to this horrible, politically and otherwise dangerous nuclear job?’ When in 1973 the Swedish labor newspaper *Arbetet* published on its front page a photo of me with the article: ‘A Spy holding a Spy course in Lund’, my Carin had to go to our boys’ school to tell their classmates that their father was not involved in anything shameful or dangerous.

Thinking of this I found a letter, written May 5, 1962 from my physicist friend Dragoslav Popovich of the UN Atomic Energy Agency. This was ten years before I had started my ‘intelligence’ adventure. In it he points out the effect of my ‘jumps’ on my Carin: ‘Carin does not deserve such a horrible fate as to be the wife of Stevan Dedijer. I do not understand why women go after you. The only explanation is that they have a total lack of psychological insight about who they have to deal with.’

The first thing I discovered about myself was that my ‘world jumps’ could best be described by four metaphors. First, I tended to suddenly jump from one social system to another, like jumping from a plane without a parachute. Second, I often played Russian roulette with my life; that is, I would put a pistol against my head and pull the trigger, and third, I would put my head under the guillotine, press the button and just manage to remove my head in time. The fourth metaphor occurred to me when in 1978 I told Professor R. V. Jones, the inventor of socio-scientific intelligence and one of Winston Churchill’s favorite physicists, the difficulties I had with Swedish academics. He then quoted Churchill’s words for me: ‘There is nothing more exhilarating than being shot at without effect.’

Since then I discovered so many other discontinuities in my life that at a conference in February 2001 I could say and write that I am the freest man in the world because very few human beings alive today have changed their ideologies, their countries of residence, professions, cultures and families as I have. This is how I discovered
the mysteries about myself by myself. This awareness of my 14 jumps helped me to free myself of many, what I call, social and mental viruses, similar to computer viruses which prevent the computers from functioning properly. The main advantage I have over those who live ‘the life of a cow’ is that I am free of the ideas generated by nations, ideologies, languages, etc. These changes in my life were all stimulated my basic drive: curiosity about everything, myself, humanity, the universe and where it all comes from.

From childhood every human being has more or less consciously asked itself the following questions: ‘What is this world around us all about? Who am I? How have I become as I am? Where are we going?’ Voltaire in 1767 starts his essay ‘The Ignorant Philosopher’
with the words: ‘Who are you? Where do you come from? What will you become?’ These are questions that every being in the universe should ask, and to which no one answers us! In Voltaire’s *Philosophical Dictionary* he calls these ‘eternal why-questions’.

My ‘research problems’ are shared by everyone alive today and who ever lived. They are mysteries as old as history. Thus the writer of Psalms about 800 BC asks: ‘Oh Lord! What is man?’ Heraclites proclaimed in 550 BC: ‘I must search for myself’, and Socrates wrote in 390 BC: ‘An unexamined life is not worth living’.

The first society to ask these eternal questions was Greece. Professor Rose, the editor of Plato’s *Dialogues* in 1996, writes: ‘The Aegean world from Asia Minor to South Italy and Sicily was most interested in the sciences of matter and mind, what was the origin of things, what were sun, moon and stars, what was man and whence he came and whither was he bound’.

Until recently the vast majority of human beings never tried to answer Voltaire’s questions. It took me 40 years to define my very last problem, to identify these eternal questions which are the foundations of science. Now I am fully aware that our time, the Zeitgeist, is forcing large numbers to ask and to ponder about them. Everyone, individuals, organizations, peoples and groups of them, are searching for their identity, asking themselves who we are and what our life is all about. These are people like e.g. the financier Soros, actress Shirley MacLaine, the poet Pablo Neruda, the biologist Harold Wilson, novelist Wei Hus, Croat historians and British Conservatives.

My project now is to look at my evolving life to answer the basic questions of our time and describe ‘the place and time in which we live’ as E. Wilson writes in his *Consilience. The Unity of Knowledge*, 1998. All of us, millions and millions of us, will be doing what I am going to do: give their own interpretation of our existential mysteries. During the time of Lucy the first hominid some three million years ago, man started doubting and wondering about these issues, and produced questions, quanta of incompatibility of what he thought and what signals he received, which generated insights about the world in which he lived. Heisenberg of the uncertainty relation said in the 1930s: ‘In science we start by asking questions’.
All Autobiographers Are Liars

According to Einstein science starts with insight leaps that help generate axioms that are then tested in reality.

Why are we in the twenty-first century turning more and more to these questions? More and more of us will be asking them today because of the rapidly changing world. Globalization, when humanity for the first time is becoming a single social system, generates identity crises in individuals.

Since 1990 I have spent most of my time following the global trends and trying to guess the future. With Manuel Castillo, I perceive that ‘our world and our lives are being shaped by the conflicting trends of globalization and identity’. Karen Armstrong, in The Battle for God, says: ‘Their horizons were broadening and they were entering hitherto uncharted realms, geographically, industrially, socially, intellectually, and politically’.

One of my basic personality traits since early childhood is curiosity about everything man has discovered about himself and about nature. When the New Scientist in February 1972 asked what my ambition was, I answered: ‘To live to 150 and change professions several times more, so that I can learn more about the world I live in. Curiosity is perhaps the top drive in me. For when I ask a question I want to get the answer and I ask questions all the time’.

Now I shall extend my laser-like curiosity to my own identity and evolving personality. I want to understand why this problem of identity in general is now so important and why I am so late in my awareness of it. I am intensely curious to explore and discover myself and my life as a global nomad. I have been fully aware that curiosity, asking questions about everything and everyone, is one of the basic traits, one of the basic tools for acquiring knowledge about the world and myself, of my personality, but I had never stopped to ask: ‘Who am I?’ Now, I am finally following the advice of my old friend Socrates, whom I met when 14 in Italy, to examine my life.

First of all I want to tell myself who I am among the six billion human beings on this planet in this anno domini 2000, anno hominis plus or minus 5,000,000 years. At the end of the twentieth century, the most progressive century in the history of humanity, the problem of identity is the key problem. More and more of us are increasingly asking ourselves, ‘Who am I?’, as thousands of philoso-
phers before. Every one of us human beings, starting with myself, are in an identity crisis, asking ‘who am I, who are we?’

This identity crisis involves not only individuals but nations. Recently, the historians of Croatia held a congress on the question of Croat identity. The same thing is happening in Bosnia, Macedonia, Slovenia, now independent republics of former Yugoslavia. The April 1, 2000, issue of the Conservative journal *The Spectator* is devoted to the question of Britain’s identity.

My mother’s programming made me ready to accept and follow Dante’s ‘Fatti non foste a vivere come bruti, ma a cercare virtute e conoscenza’. Later I learned that Kant had two categorical imperatives: ‘I am filled with wonder of the ethical law in me and the magnificence of the stars above me’. Bertrand Russell formulated the same thought in his own way.

Those who ask my basic questions are still a minority. The majority of human beings accept as true what life is all about by some simple explanation invented centuries ago. My report is based on my insight that my whole long life can be seen as a long preparation to answer these questions as part of the greater mystery of the celebration of God. I shall write an account of my life as based on these questions, which I believe many others are now trying to answer. First of all I want to answer these questions for myself.

All that I learned about the wonder, the makers of the universe and the earth on which I live, makes me ask: what is this life of mine all about? My last problems are becoming everyone’s problem, everyone’s mystery. In this book I shall give my own solution to these mysteries. I plan to tell how my own life was a search for the latest understanding of everything outside of me and of us, including me and us. I lived everywhere, belonged nowhere – why did I live like that? Was it by choice or necessity? I changed as the spirit of the times changed. This gave me an advantage over others but at the same time I was everywhere a stranger.

Only now have I realized that my search to understand the world has been the basic drive of my existence. As a consequence of such an abnormal way of using my brain, I warn you, reader, that ‘the wonders of this man’s life exceed all that (he thinks) is to be found extant; the life of one man being scarce capable of a greater variety’
As I will often do in what follows, I have the habit of using the words of others from the past who formulated my exact thought much better than I could. The above ones are taken from Daniel Defoe’s prologue in 1719 to *The life of Robinson Crusoe*. Like Crusoe I live alone and yet not alone.

Midst its endless wars and troubles I have had a wonderful life in all parts of the planet, tackling difficult dreams. I belonged everywhere and nowhere. As Democritus said of himself, I am a cosmopolite and this gives me an advantage and a disadvantage in giving an answer to myself to the three fundamental questions.

I wonder, can I force my body to finish this personal exploration of my several lives? If you do not see on the Internet news of my discoveries about who I think I am, and of my discovery of our intelligence revolution, it means that the incurable disease ‘old age’ got me first. As I am genetically an optimist I believe as always that I will succeed in finishing my exploration of myself.

So fasten your intellectual seat belts! Stormy lives ahead!
I

My World Before Me

(1878–1911)

When I was 90 I made a most strange discovery about myself and every other human being: in spite of the endless talk by philosophers and priests of our free will, not one of us is free to choose whether to be born or not, nor on which among the infinite number of planets in the universe to be born or at what place there and with what genome. We are not free to choose our father or mother, nor our place of birth or the time or place of our inevitable death. I and all of us are neither free to be born, nor free to die.

To start before my birth I shall describe what father and mother and what place and time of birth I happened to have without any choice. This is how my mother starts telling how she first met my future father: ‘At the time of Haley’s comet in 1909, us girls from the best Serb families in Sarajevo, the capital of the Bosnia-Herzegovina province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, gathered every evening in the home of Milan Paranos, the father of my best friends Zora and Dana. This particular evening we were to meet at a dance at the Paranoses, the Serb doctors of philosophy from Vienna. One of them was Jevto Dedijer, who had been in prison for demonstrating against the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina by “Austria”.’

My own brain intelligence is too limited to assess the consequences of what mother said, the future of my own life and that of Bosnia during the twentieth century. I spent the first 12 years of my life, and altogether only 35 of my 92 years, in the western part of the Balkan peninsula to which Sarajevo belonged. I became bound to it, however, through innumerable ties.

Most of my 35 years there were spent in what was between 1918
and 1991 called Yugoslavia. Among the people there was a joke
that Yugoslavia was surrounded by ‘BRIGAMA’, that is ‘troubles’,
as indicated by the names of the countries surrounding it: Bul-
garia, Romania, Italy, Greece, Albania, Madjarska (Hungary) and
Austria. Yet the real ‘troubles’ of Yugoslavia arose from the conflicts
among its six republics, including my Bosnia. The population, each
with its own religion and its own folk culture, consisted of Serbs,
Croats and Muslims speaking almost the same language but often
in conflict with each other. The peoples of Bosnia were involved in
World War I, World War II and, in the 1990s, in their own internal
war caused by the obsessions of Slobodan Milosevic about a ‘Great
Serbia’. During my 35 years in Yugoslavia, I and my family were
involved personally in each of these wars.

So to start, one must ask, where did the ‘best Serb families’ in the
Sarajevo of 1909 come from; who was Milica Babich, my mother,
and Jevto Dedijer, my father? Why did they meet at the time of
Haley’s comet? Who was Milan Paranos?

I remember Milan Paranos as a tall white-haired man with an
irascible face, who always wore on his head a tall red Turkish fez.
In 1400, the Ottoman Turks conquered Bosnia and all of the Bal-
kán Peninsula. A considerable portion of the Christian population,
Serbs and Croats, accepted the Muslim faith and some became
land-owning beys and officers, while the rest of the Christians, liv-
ing as land-tilling serfs, accepted much of the Turkish language
and culture. By 1909, Serbs like Paranos, still with their semi-Turkish
culture, had become Serb nationalists with the aim of uniting the
Austrian province of Bosnia with the kingdom of Serbia.

When I was 12 years old I wrote a postcard to Milan Paranos.
When I visited him and entered his Turkish carpet store in Mi-
hajlova Street in Belgrade, Serbia, I was shocked when he yelled at
me: ‘Yebem ti mater!’ (‘Fuck your mother’), a common Serb swear
phrase, ‘how dare you write to me in the Latin script!’ This was used
by the Croats in Bosnia but hated by Serbs like Paranos. Yet Paranos
himself was educated in Vienna.

When Haley’s comet, which we now know through space re-
search to be a ‘dirty snowball’, a few kilometers large, appeared in
the sky over Bosnia, it generated as everywhere else in the world
many prejudices among the people about its effects. Paranos decided that girls from the best Serb families of merchants and landowners in Sarajevo should be informed that comets were harmless, astronomical phenomena.

The ‘best Serb families’ came originally from the poor serfs of Turkish landowners. However, radical changes had occurred in Bosnia-Herzegovina after 1878. At the Berlin Congress, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was given the protectorate of the province, until then ruled by the Sultan in Istanbul. The Austrians immediately introduced profound social change into the primitive, traditional Turk, Serb and Croat cultures of Bosnia. They established a new legal system, compulsory education of all children, private enterprise economy and markets and improved public and private ways of living in general.

All of these new ways of living were adopted by Serbs like Par-
anos and ‘the best Serb families’ but were resented by other Serbs, even though some of them enriched themselves under the new and hated regime.

My future mother, 18-year-old Milica Babich, met Dedijer who fell in love with her at first sight. Yet she did not love him. He was too serious! She loved to dance, and he could not. He just sat and talked to her mother Nana, nine years older than he was, about his unusual life. Going home that evening, Nana told her daughter Milica: ‘Do not forget that Dedijer is as good as freshly baked bread and the other PhDs are “fichfirichi”’, (fashion-chasing nonentities).

That first evening Dedijer told them about himself, as I learned later from my mother and grandmother. He was born in the small, stony, primitive village of Chepelica near the town of Bilecha, 60 kilometres north of Dubrovnik. His mother, the 16-year-old illiterate peasant girl Andya, had given birth to him lying all alone on ‘mother earth’ in the furrows of a field, as the custom still today requires for the first-born peasant child. As taught by her mother-in-law, she had cut the newborn’s umbilical cord with a tobacco-cutting tool, washed him in a nearby creek and carried him home.

‘What is it?’, yelled her father-in-law Stevan at her. ‘It’s a man!’, Andya replied, and Stevan fired a rifle, yelling for neighbors to hear: ‘We got a man!’ Then Andya was given a glass of plum brandy.

Jevto’s parents were poor, illiterate peasant-serfs, working the land owned by the Turk bey Hiderhodzich, to whom they had to give one-third of whatever they produced. They lived with their four sons in a small house made of un-cemented stones, sharing it with cows and sheep. The smoke from the fire in the center of the room escaped through a hole in the roof. When the Austrians started a school in Bilecha, Jevto’s father Stevan forbade him to join the other boys. ‘There is nothing to gain from school’, he said.

Seven-year-old Jevto learned to read and write, bribing other boys to teach him as they watched cattle. This impressed a visiting teacher from Bilecha, who revealed to the boy that he was a Serb. This revelation changed Jevto’s life. When the Belgrade professor of ethnology and Serb nationalist Jovan Cvijich came to Bilecha, he met Jevto and was impressed by his intelligence. He asked him to write a paper on how peasants in Chepelica lived and published this
In a journal. With Cvijich’s help Jevto finished the gymnasium in Mostar, the capital of Herzegovina, working after school in a Serb merchant family. He then went to Vienna with a stipend and got a doctorate in Cvijich’s subject, political geography. At the time, this subject was taught in Vienna on the theory that a people’s history is based on its blood and the land on which it lives. This, eventually, became the basis of the Nazi imperialist ideology and was adopted by the supporters of Serb expansion to form a ‘Great Serbia’ in the Balkans which was passionately advocated by Jevto until his death.

In all of Bosnia-Herzegovina and other parts of the Balkans there was only one family with the French-sounding name of Dedijer. Jevto tried to explain his strange name as coming from the Turk word ‘Deder’, meaning ‘help yourself’, adopted by an ancestor of his with the name of Aleksich who learned it while trading in Bosnia. Etymologists told me that a change of the word ‘deder’ to ‘dedijer’ was impossible.

In December 1944, I was an American paratrooper in the 101 US Army Airborne Division, surrounded in Hitler’s last offensive by the Nazi panzer divisions in the small Belgian town of Bastogne. As I ran through its streets during a bombardment, I suddenly saw the name ‘Dedier’ on a bistro. I spoke with the family and learned that varieties of this name were spread in that part of Belgium and France. A friend in the French army checked for me in the archives of Napoleon’s army at Chateau St Vincent whether there were any Dedijers in the regiments that occupied Dubrovnik in 1806. He sent me two pages with about 15 names of Dedijers, Didier etc.

In the 1950s, Mrs Roosevelt, wife of US president Roosevelt, asked my brother Vladimir, when they were both delegates in the United Nations, where his French name came from. Vlado loved to joke and told Mrs Roosevelt: ‘When Napoleon’s army took Dubrovnik, there was a young French noble lieutenant by the name of Dedijer who loved to hunt. He went to Herzegovina and a big she-bear saw him.’ Vlado, rather corpulent and black-haired, then said: ‘From the sexual misalliance of a Herzegovina she-bear and a French aristocrat us Dedijers were born’.

Milica Babich came from a very different social background than Jevto. She was the oldest daughter of Risto and Nana Babich. Risto
was the oldest son of the landowner Jovan Babich from Gradachac in North Bosnia, who associated with Muslim landowners and preferred to be known as ‘Jovan Bey’. My great-grandfather Jovan died in 1917 before I met him. All I know about him is from hearing my mother, my grandmother Nana, my aunts and uncles tell me about him, and from my brother Vladimir’s autobiography My Beloved Land.6

Jovan and his brother came to Gradachac in the 1860s. Family legend has it that they killed a Turk bey and had to flee from Herzegovina. In Gradachac they became merchants, trading in plums and wheat. When Captain Gradachevich of Gradachac rebelled against the Sultan in Istanbul in the 1860s and was imprisoned, Jovan bought his villages of land worked by Muslim serfs and built himself a large three-storey house near a creek. After 1878, Austro-Hungarian Bosnia, including the Gradachac Babich family, prospered in commerce and land speculation.

Jovan Babich and everyone of his family followed strictly in their life, especially in their attitude toward women, the traditional, primitive Serb folk culture and the Turk culture of the rich Muslim landowning beys in Bosnia. The family was a traditional Serb ‘zadruga’ (commune). The father and his grown sons and their families lived together on the common land in the same house and followed the Serb religion. Jovan himself, contrary to his wife and his sons and their families, refused to accept the Austro-Hungarian civilization. He, his sons and their families, about forty of them, all lived in one large, three-story house with a pond and a mill together with 40 servants, most of them Muslims. In such a traditional Serb family commune, the father decided about everything and everyone. When he came home from his store, the whole family and all the servants, altogether about 80 people, had to line up and kiss his hand. After that, he prayed aloud for more than half an hour with his whole family around him. My mother wrote in her diary that all the children hated this. ‘I often prayed’, she wrote, ‘that he would drop dead and save us from his boring loud prayers. He ate alone sitting on a raised place above the rest of the family’.

Jovan was a despot, deciding about everything, including the smallest detail about every member of his family, especially the women.
I learned when I was a boy that one day his daughter Julka received a postcard from a young man. Jovan asked a servant to put a rope in the well to stiffen it, called Julka and whipped her senseless. His granddaughter, the 15-year-old Zlatka, my beautiful beloved aunt, was married to a business partner’s son from the town of Bijeljina. She first met her husband on her wedding day. She was so sexually maltreated that she ran away to her mother in Gradachac, crying: ‘You can cut my throat but I will not return to him’. I remember hearing her tell us that her father-in-law, a rich merchant, was so stingy that he refused to repair the outdoor toilet which everyone had to use. One day it broke under his heavy weight and he fell into the shit. When Mujo the gypsy, specialist in toilet repairs, came to pull him out, he wanted 20 crowns and they debated for half an hour how much his rescue would cost.

In Jovan Babich’s family, the women, headed by his wife Milena, preferred the new Austrian culture. Milena herself was well educated and learned to speak German and Italian. She made all the Babich girls go to school. My mother went six years to school in Zagreb and Sarajevo. Milena made women in the family associate socially not only with the Turk beys families as Jovan did, but also with the Austrian officials and Croat and Muslim civilians. Milena was strong-willed. From her own savings she bought Austrian furniture for one single room. Jovan in his Turk fez and clothes refused to step into that room.

When mother came home to Gradachac at 17, her mother Nana said: ‘Now you will go to my school. Every day you will bathe your eight brothers and sisters and help to make bread for 80 of us, family and servants’.

Jovan, however, loved Milica as his eldest grandchild and loved to talk to her. One day she came to him, as she told me, and said: ‘Grandfather, buy me a “curac” [a penis]. I have seen the boys have them and they tease me that I don’t.’ ‘Where can I buy you a curac?’ Jovan asked. ‘In Vienna!’ Milica answered and Jovan promised that he would order her a curac. After that, every day little Milica asked the astounded postman: ‘Have you got my curac from Vienna?’

One day, the chief cook in the family named Muhamed came to her mother Nana and said, ‘I will kill Milica! Every day I do my
prayers, she kicks me in the ass!’ Nana explained to Milica to leave Muhamed alone in his prayers.

My mother had great respect for her grandmother Milena and mother Nana. She told me as a boy that on holidays all the priests, Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim, came to her home and Jovan gave each a gold ducat. Milena, who believed in the old Bosnian ‘bogumil’ non-hierarchic religion, said aloud at dinner that day; ‘None of them are God’s men! They only want a gold coin!’

Occasionally Jovan ordered one of the girl servants to take a blanket and wait for him under a pear tree. There every grown-up in the family knew that he had sex with the girl. If she became pregnant, he arranged her marriage with a servant man.

My grandmother Nana ended Jovan’s dictatorship when Milica was about 14. One day Nana loaded all her children in the best carriage and ordered the driver to visit a bey family. At that moment Jovan yelled from his balcony, observing everything in his house: ‘How dare you, Nana, order the carriage without my permission!’ At that Nana yelled: ‘For 16 years I have been working like your slave, and I and mine have been treated unjustly by you all the time. I must ask you for everything. Now I am leaving.’ She ordered the driver to drive away and never came back with her children to Jovan’s house until after his death.

Although following all conventional Serb family habits, including those of marriage, all the Babich women, led by Milena and Nana, believed strongly in fairness and justice among all human beings. This was inspired by their position as women with almost no rights in the family and especially in the family ruled by Jovan. He followed both the Serb and the Muslim tradition of treating women as more or less unintelligent beings, made only for sex.

After all his sons and their families left his house, Jovan lived and died all alone there. One former servant girl, who was married, fed him.

The day after the evening at Paranoses, Milica took a train to Mostar with an aunt to see Jevto. She was surprised to see him presenting her with a big bouquet of flowers. He had apparently fallen in love with the vivacious, beautiful Milica at first sight. His courting of Milica continued more and more intensely. He wrote
love letters to her which were read by Nana, who dictated to Milica how to answer them. Finally he officially asked Risto and Nana for Milica’s hand. When that happened, Milica was shocked. ‘I let him know’, she said, ‘that I did not love him. How can he insist on our marriage!’ ‘These were’, Milica wrote in her autobiography, ‘the worst days in my life’.

One day when Jevto returned from a geographic expedition, Milica was at the Paranoses. Nana sent a servant girl to bring Milica home to meet Jevto. Milica refused. Another servant girl came and finally Nana arrived, grabbed the 19-year-old Milica by the ear and dragged her home, saying: ‘I will kill you if you are not nice to Jevto. You do not deserve to marry such a good man!’

When Jevto got the appointment as assistant professor to Cvijich at Belgrade University, Nana arranged the marriage. She practically forced Milica to accept Jevto. Later in my life mother told me several times, almost defiantly: ‘I never loved him’. Jevto wrote Milica every day. Here is his last letter which I still have with me in Dubrovnik:

The day of our wedding is approaching and I am looking forward to it with joy. I do hope that in our joint life, you will feel what is good and warm in me. In me there is violence, severity and stubbornness. But I do hope and am convinced that you will know and feel what is good in me. I deeply believe in our future, my beloved Cica.

Mother often told me: ‘At that time in Bosnia women had no choice. They had to marry who your family decided. It was unjust, but that was the custom of the times in Bosnia.’

As I aged, I became aware more and more of the strong influence the Babich women, great-grandmother Milena, grandmother Nana and my mother Milica, had had on my ways of thinking. As I wrote in a paper dedicated to my mother: ‘She programmed me in a variety of ways and gave me the sense of what is just and fair in society, including religion and many other things’. Now I think of it, I remember that Nana made me learn by heart the prayer to Mary, the virgin mother of God. She did it to teach me that it was a woman who created the creator of everything!
On many difficult occasions, I asked myself what Nana and mother would have done in the circumstances I found myself in. The last time I did this was in the early 1990s. I was in a plane flying to a consultant job in Zurich. Suddenly I realized that in the first class was Lord Owen, the United Nations representative in Bosnia, then attacked by the Serb troops. Until that moment most of the NATO leaders of the USA and Europe, like President Clinton, Prime Minister Major, Lord Owen and Bildt, the Prime Minister of Sweden, did not understand what was going on in former Yugoslavia. They believed the war criminal Milosevic that there was a civil war, not an aggression by the Serb army to establish ‘the Great Serbia’, including all the non-Serb republics of Yugoslavia. The Milosevic army made hundreds of thousands of people refugees from their burned homes and slaughtered tens of thousands of Croats and Muslims. I had just read Lord Owen’s book in which he wrote: ‘I told Milosevic that he would not get a Great Serbia, but he would get a greater Serbia than he had’. USA and Britain, advised by Owen, established at the Dayton peace conference ‘the Serb Republic’ in Bosnia in the very region where the Serbs had committed the worst atrocities against the Croats and Muslims.

I was so incensed to see Lord Owen that I wanted to beat him up. I went to the toilet and told myself: ‘But nobody will see it!’ Then suddenly I thought about what mother and Nana would have done in this situation and laughed aloud to myself, for from both of them I had inherited the trait that between the ideas in my brain and what I said there was only a short circuit. So I took my calling card, wrote on it: ‘Owen, you should be ashamed what you did to the people in my Bosnia’, signed myself ‘Stevan Dedijer, a Serb’ and shoved it into his hand. Two weeks later a friend from the British intelligence faxed me: ‘What were you doing to that rat Owen, Steve!’

This is how the world before me, especially the thoughts of three generations of women in my family, influenced me in my long life until today.