



2011 Society for Humanistic Anthropology Fiction Contest Winner

Tito Trivia¹

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Where was Tito born? In Kumrovec.

Who were his parents? Franjo and Marija Broz.

How many older brothers and sisters did he have? Six.

What is the name of Tito's paternal great grandmother? Anna Medvedecz.

What is the name of Tito's maternal great grandfather? Andreas Blasichko.

What is the name of Tito's fourth grade teacher? Stjepan Vimpuhek.

Rada was nine years old in the summer of 1991. She was the federal republican Tito Trivia champion of Bosnia Herzegovina. After winning a school-wide competition, Rada had progressed through every level, dazzling the judges with her seemingly endless store of information about the details of Josip Broz Tito's life, the now deceased leader of the country that was then called the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. As far as Rada was concerned, Tito was the greatest man who ever lived. She liked nothing better than to spend her free time studying about his life. Rada knew everything about him, and could answer the judges' questions as if they were asking her what her favorite color was.

Who was Tito's first wife? Pelagija Belousova.

How old was she when she married him? Fourteen years old.

How many children did she have? Five.

How many survived? One son.

The Yugoslav national Tito Trivia championships were scheduled to be held in Belgrade in the fall. There were only five other champions in Yugoslavia, those five students who had won the republican championships in Yugoslavia's other socialist republics: Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia. Rada would be competing in the finals to be named the "Tito Trivia Champion" of all of Yugoslavia. It was a title she wanted more than anything else in her young life. She was single minded in her pursuit of it, the way only bookish nine-year-old girls could be. Rada was rather pretty for her age, slender and graceful with long curly chocolate brown hair that reached

Anthropology and Humanism, Vol. 37, Issue 1, pp 105–108, ISSN 1559-9167, online ISSN 1548-1409.
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DOI: 10.1111/j.1548-1409.2012.01111.x.

the middle of her back. Although her eyesight was fine, she wore thick-framed glasses because she thought they made her look more serious. Her parents were both surgeons, spending long hours away from home. Rada's older brother, Goran, was supposed to look after her, but he knew well enough that she would spend her entire afternoons after school reading biographies of Tito's life. He would leave her in the house while he hung out with his friends or spent time fooling around with his new girlfriend, Aisha, in their parents' bedroom. Rada liked Aisha because Aisha did not laugh at Rada's Tito obsession the way so many of Goran's other friends did. Aisha liked Tito, too, telling Rada that without Tito there would be no Yugoslavia. Aisha also gave Rada an old portrait of Tito that Aisha's parents had from the early 1960s. Rada told Goran that he should marry Aisha, even though he was only sixteen.

When was Tito awarded the Order of Georgi Dimitrov in Bulgaria? September 22, 1965.

When was Tito awarded the Grand Collar of the Order of the Andean Eagle in Bolivia? September 29, 1963.

When was Tito awarded the Grand Collar of the Order of Almaraz with sash in Afghanistan? November 1, 1960.

When was Tito awarded the Knights Order of the Elephant with Sash in Denmark? October 29, 1974.

When was Tito awarded the Grand Collar of the Order of the Queen of Sheba with Sash in Ethiopia? July 21, 1954.

When was Tito awarded the Grand Collar of the Order of Pahlavi with Sash in Iran? June 3, 1966.

When was Tito awarded the Grand Cordon of the Supreme Order of the Chrysanthemum in Japan? April 8, 1968.

When was Tito awarded the Order of Lenin in the Soviet Union? June 5, 1972.

Rada spent the entire summer of 1991 sequestered in the library or at home reading her Tito books and making flashcards with all sorts of facts that she thought might appear in the competition. She concentrated on dates and names, making complex chronological timelines of Tito's life. She had a good memory and knew that she would be able to recall anything that she put on the timeline. The challenge was to make it as complete as possible. Of course, there were always holes, questions that were unanswered by the official history books. What was Tito's shoe size when he died? Did he sleep on his side or his back? If on his side, did he prefer left or right? What kind of soap did he use? Did he ever suffer from indigestion? Rada knew these were idle curiosities of hers—the judges would never actually ask something personal like that. Still, she found herself sometimes daydreaming about meeting Tito and asking him all kinds of very personal questions and then compiling them all into a definitive book of facts about his life. She would then be the undisputable Tito expert. Of course, she would still go to university. Rada planned to become a modern historian with a major in Tito Studies. She would be invited to talk shows. She would be able to travel around the country judging Tito Trivia competitions for the rest her life—the famous Tito Trivia *wunderkind* who became the Tito Trivia Champion of all Yugoslavia at nine years old.

In what year did Tito win a silver medal in an army fencing competition? 1914.
Where did Tito first meet his Austrian wife, Lucia Bauer? In the Hotel Lux in Moscow.
In what year did Tito open Yugoslavia's borders to all foreigners? 1967
Where was Tito between the first and fourth of February 1979? Kuwait

Rada hardly noticed when Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence on June 25th or when the Croats bowed to European pressure and agreed to postpone their declaration for three months. Tensions were mounting all around, and she heard her parents whispering at night in the kitchen, talking about the end of Yugoslavia. Rada knew that there was a lot of talk on TV about politics and nationalism and independence, but she was nine. All of it sounded like grown up stuff. There was a small war in Slovenia, but it was over quickly. Her mother warned that there could be a bigger war. Rada thought this was just her mother worrying the same way she always worried that Rada would catch cold if she stood too long in the draft. After a while it seemed that Goran and Aisha were also starting to be worried, and this concerned Rada, not because she became aware that her country was falling apart around her, but because she did not like to see her brother and his girlfriend so unhappy. She wanted them to marry and have children so she would get to be clever auntie Rada who knew everything about Tito. As the political situation worsened, day-to-day life went on. Rada thought of nothing but the upcoming competition.

How old was Tito when he married Jovanka Broz? 58
How old was she? 27
Who was the best man at their wedding? Aleksandar Ranković

The Croatian War started in August 1991. Over the next six months, over ten thousand people would be killed, as the Republic was ripped apart. Lives were uprooted, homes destroyed, families separated and displaced. There would be no Yugoslavian Tito Trivia competition.

When did Tito die? 3:05 p.m., May 4, 1980.
Where did he die? In Ljubljana, Slovenia.
How many Kings attended his funeral? Four.
How many Presidents attended his funeral? 31.
How many Prime Ministers? 22.

The war would eventually come to Bosnia, too. Sarajevo would be destroyed. Tens of thousands more former Yugoslav citizens would lose their lives. Neighbors would turn on neighbors, friends betray their friends. Like the Bulgarians, the Yugoslavs would watch their economic system come crumbling down around them. Unlike their Eastern neighbor, they would lose their entire country, too. Rada's father would be badly wounded by a shell that hit the hospital. Aisha would be sent to a camp and be raped repeatedly by Serbian soldiers. Goran would be drafted into the Bosnian army and would be killed three days after his nineteenth birthday. Rada and her mother would finally have to flee the house she grew up in, leaving behind all of her books and notes, joining the mass exodus of refugees flooding into the now independent Croatia. Only after the war was over were they reunited with her father. Aisha sought asylum in Sweden. Rada never saw her again.

* * *

About seven years after the Dayton Accord which finally ended the Bosnian War, Rada found herself in the United States, studying at the University of Pittsburg for a semester. Before returning home to Sarajevo she was given the chance to intern for a young assistant professor at a research center in Washington. Rada took the opportunity. She spent two months in Washington working closely with the American woman who was a newly minted Ph.D. and who knew a fair bit about the Balkans, having lived for over a year in nearby Bulgaria. One night, this woman invited Rada over to her small studio apartment in Rosslyn for dinner. After an evening of easy conversation, they had just opened a second bottle of wine when the American asked about the war. Americans always wanted to know about the war.

Rada took a deep breath, getting ready to deliver her now standard spiel about how grateful the Bosnians were for American support and that without Dayton the war would still be going on. But the American interrupted her before she could start and said, "I am sure you get asked about this all the time. It must be a pain in the ass for you."

"Yes," Rada admitted.

"What I'm curious about is how the war affected ordinary people's lives. I don't care about the politicians or the peacemakers. I care about the individuals. Like you, for instance, what did you lose? What do you regret most about the war?"

Rada thought of Goran. She thought of Aisha. She thought of returning to see her home in Sarajevo completely destroyed. She knew her answer. It was terribly childish, but absolutely true.

"That I never had the chance to become the Tito Trivia champion of all Yugoslavia."

Note

1. "Tito Trivia," *Lost in Transition: Ethnographies of Everyday Life After Communism*, Kristen Ghodsee, au. Pp. 155–160. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Copyright 2011. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.