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Montenegro Today

When Montenegro chose to part ways from Serbia in 2006, it was a brave move, especially given its tiny population. But toughing it out is something these gutsy people have had plenty of experience in. Montenegro's national identity is built around resisting the Ottoman Empire for hundreds of years in a mountainous enclave much smaller than the nation's current borders. Today, fierce little Montenegro has its sights set on joining an entirely different kind of union: the EU.

Best on Film

Casino Royale (2006) James Bond plays poker in a casino in Montenegro; suspend your disbelief, as the Montenegro scenes were actually filmed in Italy and the Czech Republic.

The Battle of Neretva (1969) Featuring a stellar cast including Yul Brynner and Orson Welles, this movie garnered an Academy Award nomination. It's set and filmed across the border in Bosnia, but director Veljko Bulajić was born in (what is now) Montenegro.

Best in Print

The Son (Andrej Nikolaidis; 2011) Set in Ulcinj over the course of a single night, this novel won a European Union Prize for Literature.

Realm of the Black Mountain (Elizabeth Roberts; 2007) An interesting and detailed dissection of Montenegro's convoluted history.

Montenegro: A Novel (Starling Lawrence; 1997) An entertaining tale of politics, bloodshed and romance set at the dawn of the 20th century.

Black Lamb and Grey Falcon (Rebecca West; 1941) One of the classics of travel literature.

The Never-Changing Government

Montenegro's 2016 general election was a hugely contentious affair, marked by protests, scandal and intrigue. But for all of the kerfuffle, the results remained the same as they have since 1990, with the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) holding tight to the reins once again. Considering that the DPS was born out of Montenegro's Communist Party, one could argue that it's been in power continuously since 1945 in one form or other. However, today's DPS is a long way from communist, having embarked on an enthusiastic and often controversial campaign of privatisations since the demise of Yugoslavia.

Much of the party's successes – and many controversies – boil down to one man: Milo Djukanović. A charismatic, handsome man with alleged mafia ties, Djukanović has been the president of the DPS since 1997, and – apart from a few scattered years of 'retirement' – has been either the prime minister or president of Montenegro since 1991. Following the 2016 election, Djukanović handed over the prime minister's position to Duško Marković (formerly deputy PM), though there's little doubt that he will remain the chief mover and shaker in Montenegrin politics; he's said to be eyeing the presidency in 2017. It's a situation redolent of Vladimir Putin and his many power swaps and perennial string-pulling, but don't tell Djukanović that: Russia is one of the reasons he's stepping down (for now).

Djukanović has alleged that Russia – with a little help from Serbia – was behind a coup plot to derail the elections because of the DPS' pro-NATO and EU stance. The Montenegrin prosecutor claimed the suspected would-be coup members – 20 of whom were arrested on election day – planned to incite violence on election night and have Djukanović assassinated. Djukanović also accused his opposition – the Democratic Front Alliance (DF), a coalition composed mostly of pro-Russian and pro-Serbian groups – of being funded by Russia, a