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DRAGIŠA VASIĆ

DRUMMER RESIMIĆ

They marched or bled, an inspection hasn't been requested for a long time, and it was considered an upside to war. Until one morning, when they woke up to snow in a ceased Turkish town and the regiment orderly, clearly upset, announced to the battalion orderlies that: precisely at noon, they will report to the commander at regiment headquarters, in front of the government building.

Just before noon, in the yard of a large building, a dozen freezing soldiers, standing in double line formation, mustaches and brows covered with snow, flushed and anxious, impatiently waited for their commander, who was signing mail in a warm Turkish room.

The commander finally appears, tall, sullen, wearing heavy military boots and a long, lined overcoat, and somberly descends down stone stairs and approaches the anxious men, who after a brisk command stand at attention, as if they were frozen stiff.

The first soldier gives him a sharp salute:

"Colonel, sir, I have been ordered to report to you by the commander of the second battalion because I said to a group of soldiers: 'the commander and the officers have it easy because they have horses, while we trudge through mud and water, our boots and feet wet,' and I said this..."

The commander, calm, thinking, moves on to the next soldier with a stern expression on his face:

"Colonel, sir, *we* snatched a horse from some Bulgar..."

"You? And who is *you*, you sons of..?"

"Colonel, sir... we're the first unit... squad... reporting to you by the order of the commander of the fourth battalion, because I took a horse from a Bulgarian, and then sold it to another... farmer."

“Aha, aha!”

Then the third:

“Colonel, sir, I’ve been ordered to report to you by the regiment adjutant because I didn’t execute the orders of Corporal Kamarić, the senior orderly.”

The commander seems preoccupied as he listens to the soldiers, as if he had just remembered some more urgent business, and then, agitated, he moves on to the fourth soldier in order to cut short the inspection.

The fourth mumbles something, but gets confused.

“Colonel, sir, I’m reporting to you... I’m asking for a three-day leave... my brother was killed at Merdez... we’re telephonists...”

At that point, the first three receive slaps across their frozen cheeks, and the junior clerks back away, hiding their curious heads behind windows. The commander slaps their right cheeks with his left hand, because it’s more convenient. He pauses for a moment, with his hands behind his back, biting his upper lip, and then continues to slap their left cheeks with his right hand as his wedding band sweeps over teeth or hitches onto buttons on shoulder straps; then, he gives a swift order for the superiors to turn in their incriminatory reports, and tells the fourth soldier his request for leave is denied. And as the beaten soldiers stand motionless like a cruciform, very ashamed, with flushed cheeks, stupefied, looking straight ahead, he moves on to the next one.

The fifth soldier is next in line. He is a slightly-built man with messy, matted hair on an enormous pockmarked head and short legs so crooked that a chubby man could easily crawl between them, even if he were standing at attention. With O-shaped legs, wearing an old, altered jacket and greasy, once red collar and tight non-com pants, always unfastened, without a single button, standing before the commander is the drummer, “stuttering” Sekula Resimić. He’s wearing a long chain with a knife hanging from it. He stutters, desperately struggling to speak. When his face contorts and twists out of shape, when he is really stuck, he opens and closes his big, drooling mouth as if he were yawning, letting out, with great difficulty, a couple of words accompanied by garlic breath and spit, before choking up again. Sometimes, but this was very rare, he manages to say an entire sentence without stuttering.

He was put on report because of numerous mistakes: plundering after a battle, making a hole in the drum and filling it with stolen chickens from enemy homes, beating the corporal, being late for a march, gambling, losing his drumsticks and a tent half. His commander

knows not what to do with him since he has exhausted all the reprimands that fall under his authority.

He briskly salutes the commander and, feigning he is going to be sick there and then, he leans forward, frowning, tensing up as he rises up on his toes, blinking.

“Loafer, why are you bowing? Stand still, slouch!”

He stands up straight, purses his lips, throws his shoulders back and frowns even more.

“Why are you here, fool?”

The commander grabs his ear, pulling hard.

“C-c-c-colo-n-nel s-s-s-sir I-I-I have n-n-no idea!”

As wide as a shovel, the commander’s heavy right hand smacks the left side of Resimović’s unshaven face.

“C’mon, remember, remember you grimy good-for-nothing!”

“C-c-c-could be ‘c-c-c-ause I asked... f-f-f-for a-a-a translation of t-t-the music.”

The shovel once again takes a swing and blood rushes to his broad, swollen cheeks, while the regiment adjutant reads from a list of his misdemeanors.

“You low-life, dirty rotten freak of nature! You’ve corrupted my regiment, freak! Why were you told to report to me, you gambling son-of-a-bitch? Speak! Why!”

“H-h-haven’t t-t-the slight-t-t-tes-s-st Colonel...”

The commander, in a furious rage, orders for the drummer to be tied to a tree and assigns him to guard duty. A few moments later, his arms are tied firmly; but he, leaning forward, bareheaded, his face disfigured and as red as a vampire’s, jerks and twists trying to break free while screaming at the top of his lungs:

“Long live Crown prince a-a-a Đorđe... How shameful, my brothers, a Serbian soldier tied up. Mother, look a-a-at the v-v-vindicators of K-k-kosovo!...”

He knows that the one he is hailing is not the Crown prince, but this represents a type of rebellion no one can punish him for, and he continues relentlessly, just for spite:

“Long live Crown prince a-a-a Đorđe!”

The commander appears at the window and orders the soldiers to set the fool free, threatening to kill him personally in the very next battle. Resimić is snickering as they untie him, winking at the soldiers and, all red in the face, he triumphantly goes into his tent, sets his drum in front of him with the undamaged side facing up and pulls out a worn out pack of cards from his greasy jerkin, spits on his fingers before shuffling the cards and calls out to the soldiers who begin peeping out of their tents with curiosity.

“Shop’s open, let’s go folks! a little b-b-blackjack, a little f-f-faro. Have you seen me shuffle?... Payment in cash at the b-b-bank of Resimić. No credit, let’s go folks!”

And the soldiers, carefully looking in the direction of headquarters, approach him, unfastening their filthy money bags and rags, while he licks his fingers before dealing. Slouched, they squeeze into the tent and around the drum, giggling and grinning, blowing into their frozen fists and throwing down their wagers. Meanwhile, the snow begins to fall heavily, large snowflakes frizzle in the open fires, muezzins are calling the adhan from the mosques and heavy cannon fire is heard in the distance as Resimić’s unbuttoned pants gape open under the tent.

The regiment is leaving the camp. The soldiers form a military column and head on a march through a cloud of dust, cursing under the blazing sun.

“Resimić, hey Resimić, comrade!”

He is falling behind, squinting at the military column.

“The cauldron was left behind, go back and get it, will you.”

“Resimić, man, pick up that water-bottle, will you. Some mongrel must’ve lost it.”

“Drummer, just don’t forget the stakes for the large tent!”

And as the regiment, like some enormous elephant’s trunk or shining caterpillar crawls forward, pushing along and stretching down a dirt road, he is still loitering alone in the foul-smelling camp covered with scattered hay and piles of garbage, always rummaging through piles, searching. He then loads the forgotten items on his back, one by one – his military cap, lined with cigarettes, slanting to one side, and a cigarette between his teeth – and clumsily meanders behind the regiment in a cloud of smoke, raising more dust than the water wagon pulled by Cesar, the half-blind worn-out regiment horse. The commander and his adjutant, on horses, usually stood on the side of the road, letting the regiment pass in order to check on the discipline of the marching soldiers. And it is only after the supply train and field sanitation, accompanied by a priest – who always reveals his embroidered peasant socks when riding a horse – and all the regiment wastrels go by, that Resimić appears, pretending not to see the commander.

“The last one again, you gambling bastard?”

“Why bastard, S-s-s... S-s...”

“S-s-s what, you dirty rotten scoundrel! When are you going to stop running alone all over the place?”

“I-I-I was relieving m-m-m-myself...”

A horsewhip hits the drum and loaded items, and those at the rear of the supply train cautiously turn around to look, revealing dastardly grins.

Later, the commander, galloping, followed by his adjutant and orderlies, heads to the front of the regiment in a cloud of dust...

But as soon as the march starts displaying signs of exhaustion, the battalion commander yells out:

“Resimić, set the rhythm!”

He starts getting ready: arranges the load, fixes his drum, loosens the belts so that he can breathe more easily and unravels his drumsticks. But, the commander doesn’t see this and yells out again:

“What are you waiting for, you stupid bastard?! The rhythm, you good-for-nothing bum!”

He wipes the sweat from his forehead with his finger, quickly shakes it off and wipes it on his trousers and then starts beating on his drum, producing dull but resounding thumps:

“Rata... macue, rata... macue...”

And with this, the tired soldiers begin to march mechanically, more easily and readily...

As soon as they arrive at the new camp and the men rush to settle, they yell out to Resimić:

“Hey you, freak, hurry and take the commander’s horse.”

“Quasimodo, go see if the supply train is coming.”

“Rasul, go get the water.”

Or:

“Start a fire!”

Or:

“Take this report to the regiment!”

After all, who else would do it if not Sekula. He neither carries a gun, or a bandoleer, or a shovel, he’s got nothing else to do...

Still, he was never angry. He did the work even when they didn’t make him; that’s how he was, he always looked for something to do, invented jobs even when there were none. In the midst of the cholera outbreak, in Veles, when the only duty of field sanitation was to bury the dead, he gladly helped the medical orderlies. He took a long grapple, attached it to his backside or collar and pulled and gathered livid, stiff corpses of soldiers scattered about the station, by the rail tracks or on the rail tracks themselves and piled them up in a deep lime pit with their arms spread and desperation in their eyes as if they were cursing. Later, during dinner, he told the soldiers how he personally buried an entire regiment while they moved away from him in fear of getting infected.

Back then, as a volunteer gravedigger, Resula experienced a great, rare and unusual honor. He happened to be at the station when Duchess Dolgorukova arrived to Veles to help, as a regular nurse, in the battle that was wiping out the heroic battalions. The commander in Veles, together

with some sort of delegation, awaited her arrival on a railway platform filled with dying soldiers. When the train arrived and she got off, with elegance and ease, the commander greeted her with a few select words of gratitude and handed her a big bouquet of wildflowers in the name of the sorrowful army and civilians as a gesture of warm regard and a token of appreciation. The Duchess accepted the bouquet, kissed it with her tiny rosy lips, looked around and noticed the bandy-legged Sekula Resimić, leaning on the grapnel, and handed it to him saying:

“My brave man, this belongs to you, not me.”

They say this happened by chance but, nevertheless, it hit the mark so remarkably and brilliantly, for never have such grace and refinement coincided with such clumsiness and vulgarity in such a touching...

Well, these were his duties, unless there was a battle, at which time Sekula would put away the drum and join the commander with gun in hand.

Upon receiving their orders, the commanders would always rush off to their troops and assign duties.

The commander of Resimić's troop, gloomy and worried, would walk back and forth in front of his troop, nervously tapping his boots with a quirt and looking at each of his soldiers:

“Well men, who will volunteer for patrol duty?”

“Me, Sssssirrrr, Captain.”

“Always you?”

He stared at the ground.

“Alright, Sekula, go!”

And during officer patrols, the chief officer would simply give him the command straightaway:

“Sekula Resimić, to the front!”

Because everyone knew he would be the first to smell out the enemy, the first to learn valuable information and the first to return to his post, in addition to the fact that patrol duty was his favorite thing in the world. And it was his favorite because he had never returned empty handed. For this reason, if he was not on patrol “officially”, he was there on his own time.

One time he accidentally, like Rus Šopalov who, while chasing after a rabbit, came across the left wing of Mirat's army, discovered something that resulted in a feat of great military value, a discovery whose significance, by the way, no one in the High Command ever acknowledged.

The division was marching towards Iverak. The advance guard, which had been securing the advance since Tekeriš, received orders to reach “Popov Parlog” at any cost: to get rid of the enemy or, if they are the first to arrive, prepare for battle.

Resimić was on one of his private patrols, that is to say, pillaging. He had left earlier and was the first to arrive at “Parlog”. There he came across a priest from a nearby village, with binoculars pressed to his eyes and his wife on his lap, watching a battle taking place somewhere in the distance, around Gučevo. The advance guard arrived later and secured its position.

From evening to morning, the dead-tired division remained in a high state of readiness. On that same night Sekula, who was wandering in the area and pillaging, came upon an ox-drawn supply train, belonging to two of our divisions, moving unconcerned down a road coming from the same direction from where an enemy attack was aguishly awaited all night. And after the patrol officers verified this and reports were sent to the superiors, the division immediately received new orders to return to where they came from, after several days of needless, incredibly trying marches.

The next day, during the march, the soldiers were smoking and talking:

“Hell, had it not been for Resula we would’ve attacked our own unit yesterday.”

And they all had a good laugh.

“Who says?” asked the troop commander angrily. “Idiots! Stop babbling on about something you know nothing about. We went to “Popov parlog” because we were afraid we were going to be attacked.”

“So why aren’t we afraid now?”

“And what are we doing behind the ox-drawn supply train?”

“Keep moving you jackasses. You’re not here to think!”

That same day, Sekula Resimić was accused by all the peasant women in Jarebica of buying eggs for the officers and not paying, and given a slap across his jug ear for each egg, which was red for quite some time, even later as the unfortunate wretch, all white from the dust, hobbled through the bloody stench of corpses that reeked horribly along the green ridges of Cer Mountain.

But his cheerful disposition never abandoned him, nor was there a punishment that could hamper his bright and cheerful mood. Because for Sekula Resimić a slap on the face, being tied up or thrown in jail was all an unavoidable ration in the life of a soldier, just like the rice, beans, bread, short shirt or army cap. As a soldier, for whom one might and could say was born and bred in the army, he was familiar, more than anyone else, with the meaning and goal of this important institution, as well as the reasons for the draconian measures normally taken to instill military spirit and discipline.

“I’mmmm an o-o-of... officer’s child, I know the military.”

However, he was an officer's child only because he was born in Č., as the son of Jefrem Resimić, a deceased sergeant, trumpeter of the home command of the same regiment in which Sekula, his son, is serving as drummer and, according to the superiors, bringing shame to his father's name. But, in Sekula's opinion, he brings honor to the first regiment of the second battalion, which had distinguished itself in all the difficult battles.

Sekula doesn't remember his mother, and one day, at the age of seven, while playing, he found out that his father, the home command trumpeter, Jefrem Resimić, who hadn't been sick a day in his life, fell dead on a cobbled street in Ivanjica, not far from the tavern "Kod Užičanina" where he spent most of his time after he left the tin mouthpiece of his shiny trumpet, tied with a green cord, in an altered jerkin with a stiff and high collar made of red felt.

Although, for him, the death of his father meant freedom from all the beatings and unlimited, absolute liberty to wander around all the interesting places in town, he nevertheless shed many tears as he stood by his father's coffin on that unforgettable day when the oldest trumpeter, an old timer, was laid to rest with all the military honors that go with his position and rank. But the thing that really moved him were the tremendously painful sounds of the death march, whose weeping echoed and, in a particularly touching manner, yelped through the town streets, as it was played by the deceased's mourning pupils with indescribable will and without a single mistake.

And when some men covered the old sergeant with dirt, Sekula's uncle, a peasant from a nearby village, took his tear-stained hand and, holding his head down the entire way, brought him home to take care of him. After a full year of caring for him like a father, when he turned eight he enrolled him in school as he would his own son.

But, Sekula didn't like school because he stuttered and the other children made fun of him in the most brutal way, and he wasn't making any progress. Even though he tried not to stutter, practiced, pushed himself, sweated, it was all in vain, his tongue remained persistently disobedient.

Many a time, as he walked to school he would see an elderly man in the distance coming towards him and wished to greet him, bid him *good day* like all the other children. And as he moved closer to him he would repeat: *good day, good day, good day* until he met up with the elderly man, but then, his tongue would suddenly inexorably stiffen and he would, silent and despondent, walk by without a greeting.

When by the end of the second year no progress was made, his uncle called him over and said:

"For God's sake Sekula, it's been two years now that I've been listening to you stutter o-s, n-o-s, os, nos, and your old uncle has been

bled dry because of your slates, slate pencils and sponges. There's no use, you have to learn a trade." And as soon as the next day, Sekula was in town where he found a trade for life, which he had to learn anyway he knew how.

This trade he had chosen for life was, to some extent, military in character or better yet a military vocation, that is to say, closely related to the military. The trade was a boza vendor. Having been granted an exclusive licence to sell boza, halva and salep to the military, his boss, an immigrant from Macedonian Kruševo, eagerly hired Sekula on the spot because he had recently lost his apprentice and because Sekula made a favorable impression on him. Sekula's job, as an apprentice of the mentioned trade, was quite simple: to accompany the troop of the garrison in question on all its tactical movements, follow it wherever it goes: on maneuvers, war operations, as well as war exercises, shooting ranges, target practice and swimming.

This was how, on a bright May morning, while all the children were hurrying off to school, he began his new life, with his crooked legs and a new canister fitted in yellow brass that shone like epaulettes. And so from that day on, always in the early morning, when the weather was nice and while a blare of ringing trumpets awakened from their sweet dreams warm, hot-blooded girls which, hidden behind curtains, in nightshirts falling from their shoulders, peeped out to see the commanders on horses, he waddled behind the battalion, hunched over under the weight of a full canister, out of breath, sweaty, but cheerful and defiant. And as soon as the battalion would leave the town behind and begin its battle march, he would join the advance guard, which he accompanied on missions, and then wait in the shade until the storm was carried out, at which time he would secure the canister by straddling it so the soldiers wouldn't knock it over, and take payment in advance from those he didn't trust, or felt like he couldn't rely on their honor and virtue as soldiers. So, as the days passed, in constant contact with the military, he slowly acquired various types of knowledge in tactics, strategies, fortification and war skills; he had the "war service" down pat, and he too spoke like a soldier, using curse words or not, depending on the circumstances.

For example, when someone says to him:

"Sekula, go over to the exterior guard unit number 1, will you, and take this flatbread with cream to Second Lieutenant Ćosić."

He would give him a salute:

"... Yes, Sir!"

Then leave and find the exact hilltop where the exterior guard unit number 1 was located.

Or:

“Sekula, you know where the left-wing outpost is?”

“Yes, yes, of course he knows,” shout the officers.

“Well, you’ll be there. And as soon as you see the battalion commander you let us know, alright?”

Then the officers, relaxed, like in camp barracks when there’s nothing to do, would play cards until Sekula bleated like a goat three times at which time they jump to their feet, waken the soldiers and continue with their lecture on flanking maneuvers, cavalry charges on infantries, when to command “in a circle” or something of this sort...

At the proving grounds, in scorching heat, when he would get tired of making fun of the recruits because he was better at “weapon practice and guard duty”, he went to the lookout unit in the gully and there he would kill lizards, listen to dirty stories, blow the trumpet or bang on the drum to hold the fort while they got their sleep.

He was in town only when there were no exercises, or when classes were held and the soldiers were less thirsty.

Usually around lunchtime, the hottest time of the day, when the sun is so strong you feel like your head is on fire, as blowflies buzz in windows and the hot wind carries catkins down empty streets, and the whole town is asleep in sweaty nightshirts; when the sky and the hills are overcast by glowing heat, and in the gardens, with drooping heads resembling humans hanging from a noose, hunched over sunflowers stand staring, he would wobble down deserted streets, covered with red-hot cobblestone, circling the town:

“Boza... ice-cold boza...”

And as he moved from bench to bench, shade to shade, he would listen to the snores of vendors behind counters in watered shops, and watch the geese honk as they wobbled with difficulty across the hot cobblestone, and barefoot, scantily dressed children playing in the shade or chatting like sparrows under eaves.

Then he would doze off, shaking his head and swinging his legs.

As apprentices in front of the shops teased him:

“Hey, Sekula, they’re drinking your boza.”

“Sekula, give us two glasses for a nickel coin.”

He would open his eyes slowly, look around, blink and utter one single word, a dirty word, known only in this town, but offended no one because they all used it to shut someone up.

“Porav...”

“Cide.”

“Ciminajca.”

“Hang on, hang on, Sekula,” they retorted.

This would go on until evening when the sun goes down and the windows gape open like huge mouths, or a draft flutters the curtains like stuck-out tongues. He would then return to the shop to report to his boss, clean up his room, scrub up the canister, smoke a cigarette and then stretch out on the shop bench like a mutt...

Sekula grew up, became stronger and then for years he carried two canisters on a shoulder pole, always performing the same task of following the troop, with boza in the summer and halva and salep in the winter. This went on until he was nineteen years of age, at which time he became the township drummer after he applied for the job and was hired. He remained at this new job for as long as the township had the means to provide salaries both for their drummer, the person who bangs on his drum to gather all the townspeople and the person who, which is just as important, reads to the gathered crowd after the final tap of the drumsticks, clear and, with reference to respective regulations, strict township orders regarding cleaning up in front of houses the overgrown grass and weeds "which bring shame and damage the reputation of our beautiful town" or something to that effect. But, after these two jobs were conjoined into one due to budget cuts, he was let go because the township decided to keep the other person, who was able to read the orders, regardless of the fact that he couldn't play the drums nearly as well as Sekula.

This was when Sekula once again returned to the army and became a carter to the military supplier. These were the happiest days of his life, which he often talked about on marches, by a fire or at night with the advance guard... He would load full canisters of peppers, cabbage, onions or hay and leave at night down a gorge passing through Jelica Mountain. A silent night. Down a road, white under the moonlight and from the dust, the oxen would move on their own, and as the cart creaked and squeaked, the poles droned and the Morava River rippled, a huge moon would begin to set behind forest trees, while he lay stretched out on the hay, watching a sky filled with stars, breathing in the smell of grass and singing, singing: *Hey Morava, my village in the plains; or Bright sun, you do not shine equally...*

Only, his happiness did not last for very long. The time had come for him to devote himself actively to the army. Just as he was about to end his service and return to his old trade, the grievous, terrible, endless wars began.

In 1915, a regiment is billeted in a village near Valjevo. The peasant women have let their hair down after the couple of days that the Krauts were there, and everyone is having a good time. Dances in the evening and rendezvous at night.

And the soldiers try to ease their conscience:

“Those at home don’t forgive either they say.”

One evening, the commander gets ready to go to town, a yellow confiscated wagon is waiting for him outside, when an elderly peasant woman approaches him.

“Good evening, Sir.”

“God be with you. What brings you here, sister?”

“Nothing good, Sir. Only bad.”

“Oh? Tell me.”

“If you don’t mind, I can’t say in front of everyone. I have a complaint.”

“Come inside then.”

And the commander takes the peasant woman into headquarters.

“Let’s hear it, sister.”

“Well, I have a granddaughter, Sir, a young girl.”

“God bless. So?”

“She’s feeling weak. A stomach-ache or something.”

“And?”

“One of the soldiers, well, he tricked me into thinking he was a doctor.”

“And then? Go on please. I have other things to do.”

“Well, he comes to examine her; he keeps feeling and feeling her... oh, God, oh my dear Sir, then he says: “Leave the room old woman, I need to do a complete examination... and the stomach... something’s not right there.”

“He didn’t ruin her, did he?”

“Not that you can tell but, you know, he shamed her.”

“How can that be?”

“Well, he bit her, I beg your pardon, Sir.”

“Bit what for God’s sake?”

“Her... her breast... God help me.”

“Nothing else.”

“No, just her breast.”

“Was he dressed like an officer?”

“They say he stole a doctor’s overcoat, and he put it on, it was dark and I, wretched woman, didn’t really look. He was quiet, those who brought him just said: ‘Here he is, a real honest to God doctor. A socialist for woman troubles.’”

“Real nice, when was this?”

“Yesterday, good Sir, last night.”

“Why didn’t you make the complaint last night?”

“You should’ve seen them. They kept hounding me and we made a deal: for him to buy the girl slippers by noon today, and a scarf for me, but the lying scum tricked me and here I am.”

“So you know him?”

“I do, they say he’s the drummer. Forgot the name.”

“I know the name,” says the commander, blood rushing to his face.

That same night, each battalion organized a patrol, and the patrols mercilessly ransacked the entire village, every house, every little corner, barn, attic and doghouse, but Sekula Resimić was nowhere to be found.

The commander didn’t go into town that night, on that night Sekula Resimić, the drummer of the first regiment, second battalion, was on the run.

That same year in March, during a long lull, the New Cemetery in Belgrade was an especially dear and inviting spot for the remaining, civilian but courageous population in Belgrade, which had been both frequently and mercilessly bombarded. Despite of being elated by the victories, Belgrade used this time to devoutly remember those who had died, shower them with flowers, gratitude and tears, perhaps more earnestly than ever before. It looked like spring was awakening life only for the dead and that the living knew no other obligations but to kill and weep.

By a damp wall surrounding the cemetery, all the way up to a red and gray chapel with long, ruler-like windows and hallow crosses, where sparrows scurried and chirped, eight wooden candle and flower shops, covered with sheet metal and studded with artificial and natural wreaths, were open from morning to night. Inside, like in bird cages, behind big, white candles hanging from nails, one was barely able to discern the heads of vendors-invalids, whose crutches were leaning against tables with crooked legs wrapped in rope and rags, just like the stumps of their reticent owners.

After passing through a gate with a medium-sized entrance and a cross in the middle, women with sad faces, dressed in black, wearing veils and carrying flowers and candles hurry to scatter in all directions and stop before varying gravestones made of black and white marble, and kiss the faded crosses, embraced with wilted wreaths, which will be replaced. And after kneeling to light small wax candles and painted tin lanterns, they remain in this position for a long time, motionless, and watch the bluish white flicker of the flames weep silently, and the bees circling the oil and wax, recalling memories of their loved ones and examining their conscience, burdened by their own unforgivable reproaches which will disappear in a flash at the gate to the cemetery, as suddenly as they appeared.

Outside the big iron gate, next to the glass waiting room, covered with orders and various rules of police, on the bare, sharp cobblestones, under mild March sunrays, a dozen or so beggars sit smoking and

enjoying the warmth, in shabby military uniforms, blind or with stumps for legs or arms, held in such a way as to be noticed at first glance. They usually talk amongst themselves, chaff with each other and make jokes, but simultaneously begin wailing as soon as they see someone coming, at which time they stretch out their boney, black and dirty hands and plead with such intensity and so unexpectedly that they even alarm the sparrows that are scurrying and arguing on the roof of the bell-tower, causing them to fly away in small flocks towards the tall chimneys of brickyards towering over the cemetery.

One afternoon, as they sit around, indolent, yawning and smoking, they hear the chugging of an automobile. Quickly, they put out their cigarettes, get themselves ready, and wait. The machine arrives and stops in front of the big iron gate. And as a young man quickly gets out of the front seat and obligingly opens the door for a lady with a beautiful bouquet sitting in her lap, a white, scruffy poodle, with a bow around her neck, jumps out onto the road, as light as a feather, and stands there staring, waiting for the wealthy lady, all gracious and with a painful expression, to step out and, as usual, give alms to the beggars.

She then hands the bouquet to the young man, opens her silk bag and, in an oversensitive manner, approaches the wretched men.

“... If you please my lady, your... b-b-b-blind... soldiers.”

She approaches the blind man.

“When were you wounded, you brave man?”

“He’s shell-shocked, madam.”

“On Mačkov... k-k-k...”

“Do you have anyone?”

“Three children, m-m-m-madam, two boys and a-a-a... two girls.”

She gives him alms, and accompanied by the young man, and while the poodle is running around her, pulling at her skirt with his tiny teeth, she hurries off towards her dear spot of sorrow, with an expression of growing pain and suffering of a saint.

“Thank you, kind madam!”

“God rest his soul...”

“God bless you...”

“Buddy, you sure don’t know your math. You said three children and then it turned out to be four.”

“I-I, was rushing. And got mixed up.”

And then Sekula opens his eyes, winks and looks at the money.

Then he looks up:

“Unnh, did you see? We c-c-c-could all live on this for three years.”

Sekula grew a beard, disguised himself, recognizing him would be a trying task. He is hated by his companions, but they fear him. Because

they are all prewar beggars, fake invalids who use the uniform to scam people, Gypsies and vagabonds, and he is the only soldier among them.

He doesn't talk much and while they ramble on, he is picking lice. It's only when visitors to the cemetery go by that he shuts his eyes and starts pleading, letting out eerie mumbles, drowning out everyone else. Or, he makes witty remarks about the passersby who pay no mind to his pleading.

"... Sit here, f-f-friend, a-a-a... this is where you belong."

A milkman walks by, a peasant from nearby, hunchbacked.

"R-r-r-r..." Sekula rattles something.

"What's wrong with you, why are you rattling?"

"... When a-a-a-are you gonna demobilize?"

"What?"

"... take off your backpack..." he says, pointing to his hump.

The hunchback remembers and, turning all red, keeps walking, mumbling something to himself.

When they're alone, or the weather is bad and they're sitting in the waiting room for the spring shower to stop, they start clamouring, rambling on about anything and everything.

"Okay fine, but are the French also Krauts?"

"Yes, them too, only they're better soldiers 'cuz, in France, the elderly also suckle, so they're healthy."

"Fine. What about the English?"

"The English?... The English are sea Krauts. They live in the sea."

"Alright, then tell me this: why did some Krauts join us against the other Krauts?"

"What? Why did some...?"

"I'm asking what these Krauts are doing with us, fighting the other Krauts?"

"What are they doing with us, you ask? Well, my brother, they're with us 'cuz... well 'cuz... hell I don't know."

"Do you know, Sekula?"

"... s-s-so we'd fight for them, of course."

"Now, listen here people, do ya see what these airplanes are doin'? They say, now they'll be droppin' some sort of gas to kill us all."

"Don't think so, it's just a scare tactic."

"Joking aside, they dropped the leaflets."

"And they say the Germans have some contraptions that look like fish, and they swallow up ships like Sekula does pies at wakes."

"Alright, but, the Germans again are Krauts?"

"Well, yeah."

"You know, these Germans occupied all of Europe, and now they want Asia too. But I think those Krauts and these Krauts are workin'

together. Listen to what I'm tellin' you people, I'm a simple man, but I wouldn't trust 'em. I bet my right hand I'm right."

"Hey, brother, you don't know what you're talkin' about. Our leaders know what they're doin'. They're smart people, they're not gonna ask for your two cents."

"Yes, yes, they're smart people. Only, you know how it is, this is the devil's kind, they'll double-cross us."

Sekula struggles to say something.

"Be quiet, Sekula, you don't know everything."

"... D-d-damn... nitwit, I know more than them."

"More than who?"

"The m-m-ministers and ge-ge-generals."

"Why, you're the Antichrist, you're dangerous, you're an agitator."

"I'm a man just like them. I talked to the ministers. All a-a... h-h-halfwits like us. If it weren't for me stuttering, I'd be a ge-ge-general too."

"The man's right you know: if he didn't stutter and if his old man was Krsmanović, he'd be a minister or general too. This way, all you can do is starve and hold out your hand for the rest of your life."

"And what if it weren't for the good people, brothers!"

"What the heck! We'd sell lice and live on that."

"There aren't even any lice now, it's off season."

"When I was a prisoner, brothers, I ate lice on bread."

"Liar! You were never a prisoner. You were the secret police for the Krauts. And because you're a liar, you'll be eating the pavement too."

"I'm not lying, I swear. And you're not doin' so bad. You own a house with that Jewish woman and two cows. You sell milk. You're well-to-do and you still beg for handouts."

"Liar!"

"And you tried to talk me into helpin' you kill Sekula, so we could take his money. Go ahead, try and deny it. That's why you asked him over for dinner, so he'd take that road by the brickyard..."

And on that day, only a few seconds later, and to the horror of the cripples who scrambled, Sekula, without a second thought, took out a sharp knife he secretly kept in the pocket of his military frock coat and disembowelled the beggar Jeremija, called "cannoneer", who conspired to kill him, spilling his guts on the dirty floor of the waiting room. That was when the murderer fell into the hands of the police, who interrogated him and discovered he was a deserter. And after facing a regular court-martial of his regiment, he remained in prison until the cannons at the warfront announced the start of a new bloody battle.

They let him out, and after being seriously wounded during one of the first more massive battles, he found himself in a hospital, which then released him on one of those days when the complete collapse of the army seemed inevitable, and after an operation that left him without a couple of ribs, rendering him incapable of military service. Far from his regiment, which was on the opposite side of military operations, he joined the first regiment he came upon, and after giving true information about himself, admitting he was convicted of attempted murder, he became equerry to the battalion commander.

This new environment, among soldiers he had just met for the first time, unknown to all, must have been very unsettling for Sekula, but he had no other choice. He kept to himself, diligently performing his duty of looking after the commander's mare, Ruža, whose small foal, slender, cuddly and playful, interested him above all else.

As for the battalion commander, he was a friendly officer with fair hands and flushed cheeks, always a smile on his face, who had just recently arrived from division headquarters so he could fulfill the requirements for a higher rank. In truth, operations were finished, but no matter, this is why they sent him here from headquarters where he was accustomed to serving to the full satisfaction of the division generals, who favoured him... They were already deep in the snowy Albanian rocky country and the commander had only one worry: how to survive without food until they reach the sea. A few boxes of canned milk he received in Ljum Kula from the hospital manager, his acquaintance, in exchange for cigarettes, was all the food he had left before reaching the ally ships everyone talked so much about. And he was now more frequently and sternly reminding Sekula to guard the boxes in his backpack, which he is never to let it out of his sight.

And then relieved, confident that this would be enough till the end of the journey, the commander upheld his good, always cheerful disposition, until one day something happened that almost caused him to have a heart attack or something of the sort.

He is sitting by the fire, hungry, thinking about the milk when he calls to Sekula:

"Open a box and cook me up some."

Sekula stands "at attention", contorts his face, gives a smart salute, and pretends he doesn't understand what the commander is asking.

"Hey, what are you looking at? Milk!"

"There's no milk, major."

"Milk!"

"B-b-b-but there's no milk, major."

"What did you say?"

“Ruža drank it all...”

“Get the milk, for God’s sake! The four boxes of canned milk I gave you to guard?!”

“B-b-but Ruža...”

“Bloody hell, where in the world did you learn to lie like that!?”

“M-m-me? In the army, major.”

And so the lie, the foolish and impertinent behavior displayed by Sekula enraged the commander to such a degree that he, red as gore, beat him until he was overcome with exhaustion. He then took the horse from him and drove him away.

But soon, when he realized the punishment was excessive, he calmed down and felt remorse, so when Sekula promised he would compensate for everything tenfold, he allowed him to stay and put the whole incident behind them. And ever since then, each morning and after Sekula’s return from patrol duty, whenever he put his foot in the stirrup to get on his horse before heading on a march, the commander would be tickled and caressed by the scent of grilled chicken, oh such a pleasant, satisfying aroma, spreading in all directions from the saddlebag of a German saddle, which was as comfortable to sit on as a sofa.

Then the soldiers departed across rocky country, a half-dead troop all in rags strained, climbed, groaned, died and turned into carrion. Upon arriving in some village full of wild dogs and people, this formation of skeletons stopped to spend the night.

Officers sat around a huge fire, resembling a pyre, drank tea and indulged the general.

“If they had done as you suggested to the Army, general, we wouldn’t be sitting here now...”

“You’re enduring these marches really well, general.”

“Indeed, like a young man.”

“Better than all of us put together, you’re more vigorous than any of us.”

“The sea is close!”

“Where to then?!”

But, the division general, a long-time soldier, is not willing to even give a hint.

And the officers sip their tea and sit in silence.

But then, suddenly, they hear noise coming from the village, commotion, coming closer and closer, and a group of villagers appears and moves towards the general.

Wild, angry people with wry faces approach.

“Tunja tijeta.”

“Tunga tijeta. Mir šućur.”

The horde is squawking, bending over, yelling and clutching the corpse-like bones of five recruits, who are trembling like frightened deer, and Resula, who is standing silently with his head down.

“Stealing, eh? Thieves, eh?”

And the general jumps to his feet, angry, shouting as the horde screams.

“Oh, ja... valah... asker... pillage... ska... hala...”

The general is calming them down, making promises, shrieking:

“What? How? Who? Them? Alright. I... them... bang bang... right now...”

He points his finger as if aiming.

Then everyone is in a state of alert, running around. Shortly, members of a kangaroo court leave, going to a ravine behind headquarters with the recruits and Resula, who are tied up and crying.

“Mercy, mercy, general, sir... we’ll do our best... we’ll be bett...”

One of the convicted recruits is in a fevered delirium, babbling incomprehensibly:

“Pretzels, here’s some pretzels, warm pretzels!”

As he looks down at his hands, giggling and turning them to look at his nails:

“Pretzels! Warm pretzels!”

And as nightfall, as grey as smoke, descends upon the rocky landscape, wild and magnificent Nature observes the shooting with indifference.

Sekula is first. He is tied to a tree and refuses to wear a blindfold.

“This one is a true thief!”

“He’s already been convicted, general, it wouldn’t be a shame at all.”

“Please...”

“Talk!”

“Don’t let them shoot a gendarme i-i-in the head.”

And he looks up at the sky.

“A man needs t-t-t-to survive up there t-t-too.”

The Albanians are sitting, legs crossed, smoking and laughing.

Then the priest wants to hear his last confession. He refuses that as well.

“I’m on better t-t-terms with God than you, p-p-priest.”

Spraying spit at the priest.

So after three gun shots, everyone leaves.

And Resula, who bragged how he buried a regiment, is left unburied after toppling down a tree peeled by bullets, his arms stretched, hair ruffled and pants undone.

The next day the military column marches and finally reaches gentle level terrain. A stretch of green, endless meadows with big haystacks resembling fur caps. It's warm, the scent of the sea is in the air and the sky is calm, blue and clear.

And the bearded, grimy men liven up and begin talking:

"There you have it; even Resula has met his end."

"Yah, he's really done it this time, poor guy."

"But he was a bit of a dangerous man."

"No people you're wrong. You didn't know him. He was a good man, a hero. We're the same age; we served in the same company in all the wars. Later, they assigned us to this regiment."

"What? Who? What's this one talking about?" asks the commander, sitting on his horse.

"Nothin', major, just talkin' about Sekula."

"So what were you talking about? Let's hear it, what were you saying?"

"This one here, from Rudnik, knew him, says he was a good man."

"Which one is he? Aha! He'll end up the same way. A good thief, eh halfwit?... And you, soldiers, you've seen what happens to scoundrels. So keep that in mind..."

Again the military column slowly moves on, treading across soft, fine sand; their feet sinking, pebbles pinching and hurting the soles of their already sore feet, and it becomes increasingly more difficult to drag their skeletons. To the left and right of them, red and blue skinned carcasses, torn and pecked flesh with bloody hooves with no horseshoes. They look like they're desperately straining to drag and hoist a huge load one cannot do without, looking around with bulging eyes as if terrified they were about to be whipped. The men turn away, pinch their noses or stop breathing until they move far enough away. The general finally catches up to the column with his officers. He is lost in thought and with his left hand on his side, he rides slowly, staring fiercely into the distance. The officers pull one foot out of the stirrups, to rest, and as the saddles screech and squeak, they are relaxed and heavy-eyed, bending over like gentlemen callers.

Then the general spurs on his horse and moves forward with his chief officer until they reach the battalion commander at the head of the military column.

"How's it going, young man?"

"Well, general, quite well, thank you for asking..."

Encouraged by the attention, he nervously spurs on his horse, driving him closer to the general.

They ride on in silence, but then the major dares to ask:
“General, hope you won’t mind me asking... if I may... do we know where we’re going... what is awaiting us?”

The general turns slightly towards him and looks at him over his glasses.

“I’m not sure you can keep a secret.”

“You... I mean... at least... general... besides...”

“Alright, alright... So... Prepare yourself for French women...”

“To France, general?”

“... or Greece. Marseille or Corfu.”

“Thank you.”

The major nods his pretty, smiling head in gratitude for the special attention. Then he jerks the reins to slow down the mare that dared to align with the general’s.

“Milka is holding up well, general,” he says, giving the general’s red mare an endearing look.

“General, I beg your pardon... if I may take the liberty of asking one more question.”

“Go ahead, let’s hear it.”

“The decree... they say... um... that it was signed.”

“Oh, so that’s what you’re curious to know?... You’ve jumped in, jumped in... What are you looking at me for, you’re a lieutenant colonel. But...”

And the general raises a glove to his mouth.

Again the major jerks the reins because his mare has aligned with Milka.

Then the chief officer leans over, placing his left hand on the pommel of the major’s saddle and whispers:

“Congratulations, there’s no doubt about it. Back in Prizren I saw the King’s Orderly Officer wearing a new star.”

“Congratulations to you too, colonel.”

The major emphasizes the last word and the officers shake hands heartily.

Then the general addresses the soldiers:

“How are you holding up, brave men?”

“Good, good, general.”

“We must...”

“Staggering on.”

But when the general moves away:

“By God, we couldn’t be better!”

“You’re so sweet!”

“Yeah right, as sweet as honey.”

“Get down from that horse, darling, and see for yourself.”

“I’ll fix you good, cousin...”

And so on, the farther away the General moved, the more honest they became.

Then the line of soldiers begins to descend, squelching across bulrush and shrubs as the stomped and flattened grass creaked under their feet.

Still, they are moving faster because now they are not stumbling over rocks and the men are no longer walking in a single line because the trail is wider.

“We’re here, we’re close.”

“And we can’t go on foot across water.”

“Finally, we too can get some rest.”

The major spurs and spurs on his horse, struggling to get the tired jade to gallop, until he catches up to the general and then raises his hand to a coat of arms on a foppishly slanted service cap.

“I beg your pardon sir... is this to your taste, general? May I offer you...?”

And he opens his saddlebag, searching.

“Ah, what do you have in there?”

“Some chicken... and ...”

“Bravo, oh my, you’re always well stocked.”

“I bought it yesterday in Prezë, General.”

“I was just thinking about having some.”

The major winds the reins around his left hand, tears the chicken apart as he tries to keep his balance on the saddle, and hands him a drumstick.

“I know... you don’t care for white meat.”

“Thank you. As soon as we reach the sea, we’ll have everything we need.”

“Even champagne...”

“Even champagne... And... and pussy... even pussy? Eh?”

The general is shaking with laughter, the major looks down.

The military column, revived by the mild coastal sun and gentle landscape, is now moving uphill over dry land.

The soldiers in the forefront reach the top. Suddenly, a flash of something unfamiliar, pleasant, vast, and enormous, above a green, heavenly grove, blinds and fills them with some sort of new hope, the will to live and forget everything.

And those just reaching the top, all of a sudden create a cheerful commotion:

“There’s the sea, there’s the sea!”

“Hey, comrades, there’s the sea!”

“Is that the sea?”
“What? By God, it’s the sea!”
“The sea!”
“Look! Look!”
“It’s the sea!”

Translated from Serbian by
Persida Bošković

ĐORĐO SLADOJE

JOSEPH'S BROTHERS

Perhaps it would have been more brotherly
If we had beaten him to death at once
On the spot
Summarily
Instead of having
Sold him at the flea market
To the dark middlemen
At half price

But who could have known
That his sheaves would straighten up
And his dreams and delusions
Turn into
Naked truths and strict laws

From a brotherly point of view
It however remains unclear
What did Joseph do
To deserve
The mercy of salvation
And God's blessing

That's something only God knows
But doesn't tell
Those who left
Their brother
In the lion's jaws

A SAD LITTLE SQUIRREL POEM

I have never found out
What squirrels do
When they get tired of playing
With lights and shadows
And lonely walkers

I know that they frantically
Collect their supplies
Putting the gold coins of summer
And some silver coins
In their secret winter habitats

But do they suffer
In the hidden little
Rooms made of leaves

I secretly watched one that was
Curled up and alone
In a nut tree's bifurcation

Looking as if it was praying
For forgiveness of secret sins

Or sewing up with rays invisible
The slits of the world
And the cracks of the soul

Somehow sadly smiling
As if reading Chekhov

A PSEUDO-PHILOSOPHER

I am of course neither the wolf's nor the dragon's bite
But they still haven't learned that I am small and with no might

I cannot get the big owl and the owlet out of my head
How come they don't get tired of me and want to see me dead

I could perhaps be mangled even by the pigeon –
I plant words in its nest slander it in its own region

God how can they stand me all those wild grasses unknown
And why don't they choke me with that substance of their own

And the elder with its stigma and cones and sunflowers
And the old hawthorn there recalling the insulting hours

What do they spare me for and why do they hesitate
If they're already able then why don't they change their fate

And maybe they are scared of me the way I am afraid
Or God they simply see me as if I'd never been made

THE JAILER

This moment I shall break all the chains
Release the words open the jail's doors
Free the slaves of distichs and quatrains
And the labourers of metaphors

To marry off wherever I can
The nouns in their spinsterly nightgowns
With cherries in adjectives again
And the gobbling of quails with their crowns

Let the woodpeckers and the swallows
Unshackle the verse that is not free
Make apostrophes and what follows
Be heard like the buzz of a wild bee

Let's cut all decasyllables out
And make the couplets and rhymes uncurled
So that at least this once they can shout
Like children – long live the whole wide world

A LAMENT FOR THE TYPEWRITER

That one used to roar like a Tartarian advance guard
In its alphabetic gallop and Cyrillic rain hard

It used to throw up loudest thunderbolts and red-hot mass
The words that keep moving slowly like blindworms through the grass

How it used to weave those couplets how it rang in a sonnet
Now it mutely delouses itself – a crow frozen and wet

Like an egg for the soul of the dead on a nameless grave
I left it so as to play up to the world new and brave

I've sold just like that my soul and everything that is right
To the devil that gasps in the black computer at night

And breaks into pieces the goose quill and keyboard station
Pecks at the very letters engraving dedication

And now I cannot see any longer the light of day
With the exception of the one that comes from the display

I wiggle like a perch in a net with an unseen shape
Silence sticks to the inside – it is in vain to escape

AND WE WERE JUST PLAYING HIDE-AND-SEEK

Under the old nut tree
In our schoolyard
I kept my eyes closed like a grouse
Just let them be in disguise
So that I can look for them

And when I removed
The palms of my hands from my eyes
No one was there any more
It was like all of them too
Had been devoured by that pit

O God where did they all hide
Where did they all disappear
How could they leave me
How could they merely quit

I simply closed my eyes
And they were no more by my side
Just sometimes they turn up
In my dreams
And their wings fill me with fear

POCKET MANUAL FOR BEGINNER REFUGEES

Apart from the saying
That two migrations
Are like one death
One should know this too –
They will welcome you like their own folk
With bread and with salt
And in tears
Warm you up give you presents
Comfort you
Lit up with the knowledge bright
That there's a misfortune
Greater even than their own

As soon as they notice
That not asking for anything
You start to unwrap your bundles
And to acquire seedlings
And winter seeds
Summer shirts and nappies
Icons candles your hearthstone
That you do not react
To the scream of the evening train
Shouting of the ferrymen
The sound of the hunter's horn –

Your laughter will
Start to make hoarfrost
Appear on the souls
And icicles in the words
Saved for the guests –

Nice to see you old gluttons
May wolves consume you all
Perhaps you'd like a medal
A deed or a flag or a mace –

Don't you have you wrecks forlorn
Anyone else but us
After all your quests –
Damned be that oar of yours
That ended here your bloody race

Translated from the Serbian by
Dragan Purešić

DANILO NIKOLIĆ

A GYPSY KNIFE

They woke me up at seven: Moni Muret, the manager of the blacksmith cooperative had gone mad. Killed two Shqiptar women. With a knife, in Ciganska Mala, in front of his house.

It was a Saturday, market day in Peć. A swarm of people. Wagons, cattle, horses. Sheep, pigs, goats. From all directions, near and far.

I looked up at Dabetić, standing above me and realized there's nothing else for me to do but get up. I had come home late and gone to bed at three. I was working the night shift.

Hmm, there comes a time when you can say anything. Truth, like all things that grow old, can also be discarded. An old truth bothers no one; a new truth everyone.

The blacksmith was formally my man, under my jurisdiction. The position of district head of economic development was a mask for my true job. This department was, of course, run by another man. Radul Karamatijević. But, on paper, he was my assistant. For the sake of maintaining total secrecy, we strived to have me play the role of a man responsible for the state of the economy in the district as much as possible. I would attend regional conferences in Prizren, where, in 1945, the Regional Committee for Kosovo and Metohija was located, visit trade worker cooperatives, state farms, and state forests in Rugova. We sometimes overdid it, I see that now. Once we even published a critical review in *Jedinstvo* on the work of "my" committee.

This was also the source of my knowledge on the state of the economy in Peć and the surrounding region. We monitored the work of experienced experts in firms and the organizational methods in cooperatives. Blacksmith, carpentry, shoemaking, tannery, and weaving trades.

What did Peć have back then? A small hydropower plant in Radavica, below the Beli Drim waterfall, two mountains, which provided

lumber for the torched Serbian villages, one brickyard and a steam mill. Not including the dozens of tide mills on millruns around the Drim, Istočka River and Bistrica.

Well, we were actually hunting down Balli members. Primarily the ringleaders and criminals. And this general picture I had of the economy and geography in this part of Metohija enabled me to better understand and assess more easily reports from the field. We planned our actions at night, in the stone tower of Ismet Ljulj, a former Beg, one of the leaders of the Balli units we were trying to hunt down in Drenica.

There was, of course, an official headquarters. It was a sort of front, to keep up the deception, behind the Sahat Tower. It was occupied by clerks who kept archives and personal files. The headquarters instilled fear and horror, we knew this. The locals avoided it like something unholy, and this amused us. God-fearing wives of local Serbs, Peć women in colourful salvars, would furtively spit to the side on their way to the Patriarchate on Sundays.

Before this murder, Moni Muret was arrested twice, and both times he was released at my request. For two reasons. First, because he served as our bait and guide, without knowing it. And second, because he was a capable manager, a first-rate blacksmith, a master of his craft. Though, in all honesty, he was also a bit crazy. He was a handsome man and he loved women. He made the fiercest knives in Podrimlje and the best cant hooks in Metohija. Some of these metal hooks can still be found in Rugova Canyon, in places where logs are loaded.

The first time he was locked up was when, on a road behind a toll-gate, he tried to unveil two Shqiptar women. The law on removing veils and burkas had not yet been passed at the time, and Peć was black with walking shadows, covered from head to toe in dark silk, with a slit for the eyes in the veils that concealed their faces.

Muret defended himself clumsily. He had raised the veils of these women because he suspected that one of his biggest debtors was hiding from him in this manner. But to the Shqiptars, an assault on a woman was considered the gravest attack on personal honor and one would usually pay for such a crime with his life. Moni paid with gold. He managed to justify himself and reach a compromise with their brothers and husband, a carriage driver.

The second time he was arrested it was in Hvosno, behind the railroad station. My people were checking everyone getting off the train, so Seja Strugar, strictly adhering to the customs, led the women wearing the burka aside and only slightly raised their veils. This was how she came upon a man who didn't even bother to shave. It was Moni Muret.

"Why is he wearing a disguise?"

“He’s been searching endlessly for some big debtor of his, ever since the occupation,” said Krečko.

“Who is he?”

“The same person we’re looking for: Sefedin Kuka.”

“Why in Hvosno?”

“Sefedin’s got a sister there, she’s married to some hodja from Barane.”

I ordered them to release him. Not right away. The next day. Krečko had given me an idea: “by following Moni Muret, we’ll get to Sefedin.” He also said: “Muretović will sniff him out before we do; here, news doesn’t travel on the streets, but in gardens, from postern door to postern door in the walls that separate houses and yards.”

Krečko, a prewar town guard, refused to acknowledge the new, real last name of our Moni. He would always call him: Muretović. This was the name Moni was registered under in primary school and the tax administration. However, when we abolished religious and national distinctions, everyone chose to register under a name in their own language, as did Moni, Muret the famous blacksmith.

This Krečko was one of a kind. A valuable informant. Like some dyer who has handled every garment and rag in Peć, he knew about every little stain of his fellow townspeople. He was a sort of a volunteer spy. He willingly offered his services to us. I had a difficult time accepting him. Here’s why: it’s only natural that people in this line of work are neither close nor trusting, even amongst themselves, still there are those you tolerate more easily and don’t mind so much. However, Krečko simply gave me the jitters, even though I was top man in the county. Perhaps because I knew he was watching everyone, even me, and knows all sorts of things. It was in his blood, his nature, like the habit of catching flies with your hand and then squishing them. Still, I have to admit, without a shadow of a doubt: he was of great service to us. He has performed some invaluable tasks for us, which I mustn’t speak of just yet. All I can say is: Krečko was responsible for one of my medals.

I truly don’t know if we would have solved some of the cases had it not been for his encyclopedic knowledge about everything and everyone. He knew some ugly secret about every single person. He held so many secrets that Karadžić, my assistant, made a game of it when we were on duty and it was more peaceful than usual. He would ask:

“Is there at least one person in and around Peć that you know absolutely nothing negative about, Krečko?”

“Sure there is,” he would answer, feigning humbleness, as he smoked his cigarette looking down at the floor.

He really did smoke a lot. One after the other.

Karadžić would then continue:

“I bet there’s nothing bad you can say about Tiranović?”

I knew why Karadža chose Tiranović. Dušan had found a bag with millions near a hotel in Banja and immediately handed it over to the police in Dobruša.

And our Krečko, letting us get our hopes up, slowly answered:

“Nothing... Nothing except for the fact that he bribed Redža to cut the trees in the state forest above Malo Dubovo. He transported the lumber in a wagon. But not before he covered it with corn husks. Or as they call it in other parts chaffs, hulls, peel.”

I don’t know if it was the expressions on our faces, but I’m certain he sensed our loathing. Nonetheless, we’ve already seen what and how much he knew about our public enemies. He had a list of crimes committed by Sefedin Kuka, arranged by place, time and method; his family tree, family ties, possible aiders and abettors; owned property, by him, his family, close relatives; number of livestock, and the number of people living in the tower below Donja Vitomirica; addresses of his accomplices; descriptions of entrances, passageways, shortcuts, courtyards, barns, everything. Everything!

Of course, gradually we grew accustomed to Krečko and entertained ourselves at night, when the vigils were more peaceful. We divided into two groups. I was on Krečko’s side, against Karadža and Dabetić. The result was devastating: there wasn’t a single person who wasn’t guilty of something. We went as far as pulling out files on the most prominent men, and then scoured through their biographies and character traits, looking for not a stain but a speck. And our Krečko would immediately point to the spot, straight to the wound. Even in the file of Adunić himself, the chairman of the district committee.

“How?!”

“Like this: in the evening, whenever he asks one of the typists to type out an urgent report, he rolls her over.”

Dabetić, who was Adunić’s courier during the war and loyal as a dog, punched Krečko in the neck.

“Ya fuckin’ spy! You’re nothing but a slanderer!”

It was all we could do to stop the enraged Dabetić.

“Unfortunately, I’m not. I have proof.”

Krečko didn’t move from his chair, but suddenly became despondent, sad. However, Dabetić was defiant.

“Prove what? Where could he roll her over? The clerks are on duty night and day over there.”

Krečko looked at him, as calm as could be, and said:

“The key is in the key. Here’s how: Adunić always leaves two or three pages for the one he selects, to finish on her own using his rough

draft. And he leaves his office early, says goodnight to the clerks. But he doesn't leave the building. On the first floor, by the stairs, there's a room no bigger than a cell. The one with the iron door, the former vault of the Merchant Bank. The key, the only one of course, is kept by the district head. And so, as agreed, the comradess he makes the date with also slips away. He goes in first and waits. Then, when she supposedly leaves to go home, after she types out the report and says goodnight to the clerks on duty, she joins him.

Dabeta takes his anger out on his shirt as he angrily tucks it into his pants made of strong Bulgarian cloth. Then I took over:

"How did you find this out?"

"Don't force me to tell you, comrade Stanko."

And I didn't. Nevertheless, I did find out. After all, that's the rule of the service. Know everything about everyone. Even Krečko.

No doubt, he couldn't bear the thought of the existence of something he didn't know. Something on the other side of the visible. However, as is often the case, the fiercest blow comes from our own doing, an exclusive objective. Krečko was a spy at heart, it was in his blood. He would lurk from the depths of some murky craving, search for dark signs out of fear for something he holds dear and protects, the thing he hovers over and guards. He even kept an eye on his own family. His wife, son, daughter. By following her, he discovered Adunić.

It seems that lusty sly dog ordered a new schedule for all typists in the committee. Since Seja Strugar decidedly requested to be transferred to my department, the only typist left in the General Affairs Secretariat was Joka, wife of our Karadžić. A kind soul, but rigid and stocky like a man.

Adunić relieved her of all jobs after work hours. Because she was overworked, allegedly. This way, he was able to request for a typist from another department whenever there were enactments or reports that needed to be typed out urgently. Why this was done in the evenings and at night, I first found out from Krečko, then Seja and finally from Adunić himself.

One day, he invited me for tea at Hotel "Korzo". That's right, tea. Because that was all he ever drank in public. He knew: the one at the helm must watch his every word, gesture and mannerism. People observe, gossip and judge. He didn't know about the old saying: a man without vice is a dangerous man. Adunić was something altogether different: a man who hides everything. But, things that are hidden away for a long time are eventually destroyed. He had suppressed all emotions, thoughts and actions. The natural kind. Stiffened his movements, desiccated his thinking. He walked as though he were fenced in, and sat as though he were framed. All that remained of him was his dark lust

and some sort of murky greed. A constant thirst for things that didn't belong to him.

This was not the way I felt at the time. In that booth, where no one could see or hear us, he began asking about Dabetić. How he was doing at work, was he doing a good job. I noticed he wasn't listening to my answers. Suddenly, he said:

"I know you've heard about the incident with Krečko. Get him out of my sight. Arrange it with Karamatijević. Send him to some state farm. You can even make him the supervisor. I don't know how to shut him up."

I wanted to lean across the table with a friendly smile, but I was prevented by the pain in my jugular vein, from that bullet in Dečani. That's the reason I slant my head, as though I'm staring from above. Or was it an occupational hazard. I had the habit of peering like this at the men they would bring to me after they've been arrested.

Adunić does the same; he leaned over with a cold look in his eyes and said:

"I have no idea how he managed to get into the building. And I can't ask around. He knew the password, he got it from you. But what did he say, how did he trick the guard at the front desk? Fortunately, he didn't raise hell. He just frantically picked at the doorknob, hissing: "Smiljana, come out, I know you're in there!" Nonetheless, I was determined not to open the door until the end of time. But he, shrewd as he is, realized that even so, he did interrupt us. And he left. The poor girl had a nervous breakdown."

It's true; she was in bed for two weeks, shaking with fever. As soon as she was on her feet again, Krečko took her to Kolašin to stay with her aunt. He found her a job as a municipal worker and married her off. I heard she didn't have children and that her husband torments her over it. And she was, oh God, like a quaking aspen. Always flushed, pure and gentle. And from a father like that?!

I've digressed, but I must say I have to hand it to Ado. He was a man who never forgets a favor. This small favor, us sending Krečko to Šurakovac to oversee a state farm, was returned as soon as he transferred to the Regional Committee. Yes, he wanted to hide this as well. But he couldn't help himself. One day, almost as soon as I transferred to my new position, the phone rang. I heard a female voice on the other side: "Comrade Mališić?" "Yes." "I'm calling from the office of comrade Adunić. One moment please, I'll connect you..." He was on the line:

"What is it; did you forget your old buddy? Or have you turned stingy, like some philosopher? Well, you're not getting away with it this time; you're buying drinks, for the promotion. And the new apartment. And, of course, the bigger salary... I had no idea, Dabetić told me this morning."

Had no idea! Why, he arranged it.

Unfortunately, I couldn't invite him to my house. My Seja wouldn't allow it. She wouldn't hear of it. We celebrated at the club for parliament members. He, Dabetić and I.

We drank and talked till midnight. About everything. The established order in Kosovo and Metohija, the eradication of the last renegades who were out to destroy everything that was Serbian and Yugoslavian. And then we came to the subject of Krečko, the blacksmith.

Our poor Krečko, the master spy, in his black coat resembling a tailcoat. That's how deep it was cut at the back, and so short in the front that it barely reached his knees. And tight, because Krečko had a bit of a bulging stomach, a balloon under his sweater. He would button it up with one big button, probably from a comforter. In all that scarceness, this button seemed so huge, all blue and shiny.

This was how he arrived that day when Moni Muret was brought in from Hvosno. A person would never guess by his behaviour what he was bringing us, the information he had. He had something dark grey on his face, like a sock, and blue lips, resembling a cracked fig.

Dabetić, still angry because of Adunić, wouldn't even look at him. Meanwhile, I had a piercing headache and my eyes were burning.

"Nothing?"

Krečko didn't answer right away. He took off his coat, like a pair of wings.

"Nothing as far as the beg is concerned. We've been on a stakeout day and night."

Sefedin Kuka had two residences during the occupation. One in Peć, behind Bistrica, and the other between Donja Vitimirica and Naklo. Actually, this was his father's home, a stone tower with small windows, barely the size of a brick, resembling slots for pipes. These openings in the stone are in fact loopholes. These towers were modelled on old fortresses which could withstand a siege because there was water and food, and enough rooms for all needs. Such towers were owned by wealthier people, the minor or more important Begs, Turks and Shqiptars. The tower belonging to Sefedin's father was enclosed by a three-meter tall solid stone wall covered with blackthorn and hawthorn bales. It was difficult to climb without a ladder, and even more difficult to jump over because under the thorns there was also the threat of glass. After the wall was put up, pieces of broken glass were thrust into a fresh mixture of whitewash and sand. When it hardens, the plaster clenches the sharp blades.

We wanted to capture Sefedin alive at all cost.

We worked for many nights on developing a plan for his capture in Ismet Ljulj's tower, to the very last detail. The tower near Naklo,

including the entire estate, was under surveillance night and day, needless to say, in an inconspicuous manner. We were staked out in large oak treetops, centuries-old oaks, from the time of the Nemanjić dynasty; in stacks of straw and hay; in root cellars covered with fresh sod; in the guard booth at the railway station; a church bell tower; behind grave-stones. We placed our local confidants everywhere, those who could justify themselves if by any chance they were discovered. We bribed a family of gypsies to, as if by chance, lodge on a meadow above the tower, to set up camp. The men would patch up boilers and fix umbrellas, and the women – the older one, as dry as a leaf, and the younger, a luscious tease – would go to the tower at night to tell fortunes, read palms and do some bean reading. They didn't let them in. They weren't interested in wooden spoons and ladles, or straw baskets either.

The tower was wrapped in silence. Even at night, there wasn't but a single light in the windows.

This went on for the entire month of March and most of April. Sharecroppers would come from the fields; unload bags in the yard, right next to the gate, and leave. We couldn't establish if they were plotting with the occupants, not even with the best binoculars. There were three women living there, eight children, two of which were sons old enough to serve in the military, and Sefedin's father, an honorable old man.

He didn't speak Serbian. We brought him in once. What Krečko translated for me sounded something like this:

"I don't know where my Sefedin is. But I did let him know not to come to my home. The son always, almost always, betrays his father. Everything that is his father's. His view on life and people, customs, his ways and values. The son is the one who can betray his father. I accept that, even though I don't approve. I even expected it. This is why I'm not as hurt as other fathers might be, those who weren't expecting it, weren't prepared. Still, a father can't betray his son. No, nothing is betrayed in advance. This comes later, in retrospect. Betrayal doesn't exist for the future; it is intended for the past. I am at odds with my son, but I cannot betray him. Even if I knew where he was and what he was doing."

An unusual speech. Krečko said the old man thought we were going to coerce him. And he was prepared to endure.

We were the ones to back down. Our lookouts began losing their patience. I ordered that they be replaced by activists. I reluctantly sent Seja and Dabetić out into the field. And just then a shadow began circling the tower. The nights were clear, but there was no moon. One could tell that this strong man with wide shoulders and thick hair wasn't Sefedin. He tried climbing the wall. But all he did was alarm the enormous

dogs in the yard. He moved to the other side, and tried again by a corn crib. Released from their chains, the dogs' barks became fiercer. The stranger retreated.

He headed for Peć, but we lost him at the railway station. Perhaps he had crawled through the sawmill fence and hidden among the scrap wood and piles of scrapings.

Krečko said:

"That was Moni. He'll be back."

He was right. The same figure came sneaking around the tower two more times, always around 10 at night. My people reorganized the stakeout. Across a field, in a house in Ciganska Mala.

Dabetić finally spoke to Krečko. He said:

"You know everything. You're not a normal man."

Krečko's answer was philosophical:

"If a man is normal, he's not a man."

Seja was tired and pensive. She was still not sure whether I loved her. I remember she looked at me with a painful expression and uttered, as if she was telling me something personal:

"This blacksmith doesn't sleep. He didn't go into the house but went straight to his forge and began stirring up the coal."

Krečko added:

"And he's been doing this every night, for the last fifteen days."

We smoked a lot, the tobacco from Skadar. Especially my bushy-haired assistant Karadža. When something bothers him, he holds his cigarette in one hand and his hair in the other. He grabs that shrub with a sprinkling of grey and pulls it. This is also something he does during questioning. This time, Krečko was the person he was interrogating.

"You think that Muret is forging a knife for Sefedin?"

"No doubt about it."

"Then he knows the whereabouts of the Beg?"

"Not yet. But he's sniffing around. He must've heard something and that's why he's prowling around the tower. Moni's got his people. Six of them just in the cooperative. A blacksmith from Naklo, a farrier from Klina. And the two men from Hvosno. Then there's the repairman from Budisavci and the apprentice from Donja Vitimirica. They gather information on rumors circling around in the villages. Renegades are living beings too. They have to eat, drink, have a place to sleep."

"Why's he hanging around the tower?"

"Sefedin has to go to his wives sometime. He's got three. As is the old custom."

The youngest is a Gypsy. He snatched her away from Moni. I know her, and so it's no surprise to me that the blacksmith went crazy.

I laughed. And Krečko became even more serious. He said:

“Moni will get to him first.”

He was right again. Of course, we could have isolated Muret. Karadžić even suggested it. We could have arrested the blacksmith for harassing women, mostly Shqiptar, and kept him under lock and key for a while. But what about the trail? No one could have picked up Sefedin's scent as easily as he.

So, ten days after the incident in Hvosno, I was awakened, suddenly and inopportunately, at seven in the morning. It was a Saturday, market day. Wagons, carriages, curricles and ox-drawn carts swarmed in from all directions. To Peć, on a warm day in May. Down the road from Dečani and Streoce, a path leading down Rugova Mountain, the route from Banja, Dobruša and Vitimirica, a roadway from Barana and Goraždevac. From everywhere.

Dabetić drove me to the hospital. Standing in front of the dissecting room, I was given the most unfavorable news. Muret killed Sefedin. One of the veiled women in the carriage was that villain. The other was Muret's beautiful Ezra.

I didn't go in. I ordered them to bring the blacksmith to me later that evening, after nine, to Ismet Ljulja's tower, and then I left to rest.

When they delivered him, he stepped in as a man who had triumphed. I ordered them to remove the cuffs and bring us coffee. I handed him a pack of cigarettes. He placed his hand on his chest, as a sign of gratitude. He was beaming. There was no trace of the tenseness on his face that I had always seen before. He was handsome again. In these parts we have a saying: as handsome as a Gypsy.

He said exactly what I expected he would:

“I was afraid you'd beat me to it.”

“I know.”

“I'd never collect my debt. I had to be the one to do it.”

They brought in a large coffee pot, the kind that holds ten cups.... Moni dug under his greasy shirt and took out a pouch. He took his tobacco and rolled himself a fat cigarette. He licked the paper, smiling the entire time. He lit it, inhaled and then exhaled like a bellows.

“Drink your coffee and talk, Moni.”

In short, his statement went like this: he waited for our return, impatient, laying low. He had changed his posture, looked rundown, kept his nose to the ground. All because he anticipated with great apprehension that Sefedin's men would find and liquidate him. He feared more than death itself that the Beg would ultimately keep what he stole, obtained by deception, trickery. Sefedin, who had been powerful even before the war, was now more ruthless than ever. As head of the Black-shirts, leader of the hordes with white caps made of felt, he was lurking around every corner, keeping an eye on everything that wasn't Muslim.

He took pleasure in watching smoke, charred remnants and blood. And degradation, especially if it was Serbian. Each Saturday, Moni's wife, young Ezra, with an unveiled face and a restless body, would bring to the market everything the blacksmith forged during the week. The colorful rug she spread would be covered with shiny razors, kitchen knives, sickles and those daggers with black sheaths which in Metohija they call "šiš". She stood above the blades, wearing sirwal pants that went down to her traditional wooden clogs, a handmade brocade vest and a silk wrap, calling out to buyers both with her voice and eyes.

There was something in her voice, said Krečko, like she was smothering from pleasure.

This shaved man in a coat that resembled a circus tailcoat, was truly a phenomenon. He knew about even the pettiest disputes in some families. Of course, he also knew that Ezra's feelings towards Moni were not as they were at the beginning of their marriage. She came from a well-to-do family from Šakovica, who was in the blacksmith trade as well. When he came to ask for her hand, she heard that Muret made a good living in Peć, that he owned a house in Ciganska Mala and that his vocation of a gypsy serf strengthened his reputation and brought him some money, and that he was a master at making household tools and knives. It was all true, but everything changed when the Germans stormed in and then the Italians, and when the Balli movement was formed. After the building with no foundation, Yugoslavia, collapsed, Moni was burdened with worries, and poverty. His main customers, the Serbs and Montenegrins – embittered, reduced to ashes, beaten and killed, expelled – even if they could, didn't dare buy anything that resembled a weapon.

There is no better threshold to jump from than a Lenten life for a succulent woman. And someone had already whispered to the lecherous Beg that there is a Gypsy girl, soft and juicy as a ripe peach, swaying around Peć, wandering about the marketplace. His two wives had already begun to wither. And what could happen? As Adunić said: "She'll betray you, brutally and abruptly, like a woman. Finding a way to humiliate, defile and disgrace you like no one before in the process."

I have a different opinion: a woman is precious, but like all treasures, she can very quickly and easily change owners. There are so many eyes gazing at her, waiting, ready to grab, so many other hands. The Muslims have always known this. This is why they keep her locked up and covered. They are covering up the glimmer of a treasure that doesn't really care whose hands are holding it, as long as it's satisfied.

After she ran away, Sefedin would take Ezra from the tower in Naklo to the tower near Bistrica. In a carriage, drawn by a black horse that shone with good health and care. She sat triumphantly, wearing a

black silk burka and a see-through veil, also made of silk, which Prizren masters transform into the blueness of clear skies above Metohija.

It was not that they passed through Ciganska Mala, but that they slowed down at the fountain, in front of Muret's house. And Moni's weakly old mother witnessed this as she sat in the sun.

"No matter, son, let them be. Our family would be disgraced only if you did this to someone else."

Krečko liked to be just towards those he spied on and pursued. He would say:

"This wasn't the Beg's wish, no. It was what she wanted. For her ex-husband to see her in luxury."

But, it was eating away at Moni. And he began making a knife. He spent two hundred nights forging a dagger for the two of them. From morning till night, his bellows stirred up the fire for small knives, which his elderly mother took to the market each Saturday. This was their livelihood. But his livelihood was the knife he forged at night, alone, by the fire, like the devil.

He told me:

"First I made a blade, sharp on both sides, like a razor. Then a spiked butcher knife. Once I made a small sword, an adder from an old saber, as thin as a sheet of glass and as hard as flint. Sharp enough to shave. And nothing seemed quite right. I even re-forged an old bayonet, buried after the Serb army retreated towards Albania. And a piece of scythe. At one point, I thought a spiked piece of a saw would best serve my needs. To tear their flesh and leave them to die a slow death. It wasn't until last week, on Wednesday, two days before market day, when Sefedin's older wife let me know that those two would be leaving for Peć on Saturday, that I made what I had envisioned. A knife made from a sickle. Long, spiked and serrated. And a little curved."

But, instead of coming on Saturday, they came today.

Betrayed by a woman again!

As soon as I was transferred from the 24th Serbian Division to the Peć County Area Command, I heard that in a home with several Shqiptar wives, who share a husband, the eldest takes on the role of mother and mother-in-law. That there is no jealousy, that she is friendly towards the younger wives, and that she advises, teaches and prepares them for her husband's bed. And it's true, but this is an imposed role and thus filled with pretence. Subsequently, the first wife, the eldest in Sefedin's home, waited for her day of vengeance.

How she slipped Moni the information that Sefedin, disguised as a woman, would come to Peć with Ezra is a long story. In his small workshop, Moni, black as Satan, spent two nights performing a special exercise. He would wrap an old blacksmith apron, made from sturdy

ox leather, around a wooden pole and practice executing his revenge. Jumping forward, swinging, and thrusting. He was left-handed, so it was easy for him to approach the right side of the carriage. He even practiced holding the reins, in case the horse goes wild.

This was exactly how it played out. Everything. Boldly and quickly. There was only one thing that was odd: the horse stood rooted to the spot.

There was something else: the crowd of people in the streets and in front of the houses in Ciganska Mala didn't move an inch or say a single word. Not even Sefedin. Only Ezra heaved a sigh:

“Ooooh, Moni, Moni...”

The blacksmith told me this was how she would always sigh when he kissed her.

Translated from Serbian by
Persida Bošković

DARINKA JEVRIĆ

THE DEČANI BELLS
OR THE CELEBRATION OF THE HEART

I've kept quiet
for centuries I've kept your name quiet
I try it – to feel how after the rains you grieve over my hair
and how from the bells' weeping I become mute and blind after that
and don't understand prayers either
when I fall in an abyss after your forehead

because of you the daughters of Jerusalem
are all chaste and widowed as well
and ruddy sheldrakes keep wounding the spider's web
dreaming
how they are pecking wine from your cheeks
and how they are breaking off from your hands ducats made of pure gold
bridal ones
wretched ones when they come at a bad moment

my hands are rotting below the undermost Dečani stone
you a saint and biblical death
you the seventh Holy Mountain monk
you my nine Jugović brothers and the pain of Empress Milica
beauty
not seen by the eyes of a king or emperor
or Gojko's young wife

do the daughters of Jerusalem visit you
my love
if you only put your arm around my waist
I could blossom and get pregnant every spring

if you only filled my throat with your breath
I could nurse even nine Obilić heroes
(woe if the Dečani bells begin to wail
and your face merges with the frescoes)

and some birds forget the flight
leave the forest and dream of the altar
the embroideresses steal his eyes
they pull the wool over them and bring water up to his throat
and his blood could tame all the waterfalls of the world

and under the walls there sprouted up some eyes
and Gojko's wife envied me
for the low tide that I owed to blood
I return home as a sinner
with the curse of the Dečani bells in my ears

forgive me my love

THE ROOM

the room in which you're breathing like a sleeping saint and you've
been gone for a long time
skillfully wrapped in days
in former scents in words from dreams
the room made of yew and smoke tree
where you are peacefully growing old fused with the air

in this room where you exist like the spirit of a drowned man
invisible to someone else's eyes
I can finish my dream about you
start your pulse with my aorta
the one who lives in the world is someone else who looks like you
in truth you are here

so unreally dwell only the birds
the silence on which I record the unreal signs of the years
the grains of gold found in forbidden fruit
the whisper on which I stumble
the springs of living water
the stations where we always meet as some new characters

in this room I can untie bolts of lightning
weave a stinger from dreams and wound you mortally
touch the air with the palm of my hand
and recognize all new wrinkles
the dust of the roads and the winds
which have been deposited on your face

I can gild the room with your breath from the cobweb's
honeycomb so that it keep vigil over my dream

THE EMBROIDERESS

about you a silent word
as if I bequeathed a secret
softer than the breath from the throat of an angel
like pearl pickers leaned over the beauty
like gold decaying

to walk through the world with your spells
during the day ready for a torch
during the night – for a healing spring
before which heads roll and empires fall
and leaders silently pour a century-old nightmare
like a woman caught cheating
and if the universe burns down
the heart is the arsonist

in one season we are two winters
with our own snowflakes and a frozen road
we have the same warm secret under the arm of hope
shed snakeskin of chastity
the only sign standing before time the same way
between the sediments and sediments of the deceived years

the time to come offers us poison in a bowl
rosaries of waiting and a porch
decorated with a Blue Flower
my forehead has turned white so I have embroidered pierced words
a lost flock
and I wanted words of kindness
like gold decaying

THE HERO OF OUR DAYS

he roamed the world third class
lived his life somehow incidentally
he vegetated / lived hermitically so to say
but he always blew his own trumpet
he imagined he was marked as an important target
the first on the list
poor devil

and the wretch finished as collateral damage
just like that (to fill the gap)
and he (the dude) was talented for death
he passed away / met his creator / instantly
God's creature

he was sent off by the main team of the regional league
all according to the directive
he was mourned by veterans
from the four domestic wars: ah the touching speeches
about the merits the wreaths the professional wailers
there was music too!
a gun salute (here an obligatory exclamation mark)
they also gave him a medal posthumously
and he the poor guy didn't say a thing in his defence

the strategy of defence failed

ah if he just could have watched all that
the poor devil

IVAN'S

– Ah, for God's sake, it's no big deal –
Blissfully says the Russian officer Vladimir Vladimirovič
And grabs right away, a little bit briskly, a little bit pianistically gently
The gearshift of the vehicle with a UN sign

– We started for, he says
The parents of the poet Ivan Todorović
Steering the car toward the Priština cemetery
The Orthodox one

It is Saturday
The fourth of October
The year two thousand

And the cemetery has been mined

For three days
Twenty-four hours a day I've been listening to
Service information at the number 92
(the Euro-world standard for the police number)
– We have no idea where that
Cemetery of yours in this boil town is
And where does this Srb actually come from
(they add astonished)
But it has been mined, that's for sure
And for your own safety we advise you
Not to go there
Where someone recently destroyed one hundred and fifty gravestones
(that's how many the local priest has managed to count)

Translated from the Serbian by
Dragan Purešić

SLOBODAN KOSTIĆ

THE MARK

In vain you collect dresses, bowls,
ancient clocks.
Something remains behind you:
yards without fences,
neglected graves,
scoldings of old men and paupers.
You go to who knows where;
pressed into worries and hopes;
at night, on the graveyard,
you steal your ancestors' ashes.
So you are left with the springs, the deeds,
the snake in the house's wall.

THE TRACE

When the green sky gnaws its rotten teeth into the village
and pours a crowd of scaly stars onto my chamber,
I take my stick and robes, across the carcasses of dragons,
and crippled ghosts;
I follow the image and sin of my hopeless forefather,
with fear, entangled into a nest of habits,
with sympathy for cursed animals, whose bones,
stuck into mud, tremble from smell
– and I start singing.
When the ancient raven flies over my trace,
I hide into dream, where my mother,
with stick smeared by cowdung, drives rotten souls
and disappears behind the fence, into the safety of the place
on which the ended night closes like
a girl's eyes close when first faced with shame.
From the cracked skull of an ancient deity
I listen to the croaked voices of tellers,
and creaking of an empty cart
being pulled back to the village by heartless bison.
Hairy mythical bird pecks at the day
And I realize I will have troubles if I go on singing.

THE RETURN

Wherever I go, Kosovo stands like an old wrinkle upon my brow;
and when I lose myself on the roads, that wind
after me like burning worms,
I go back, like to the death when it gloriously calls me.

Leaving confused traces,
with entwined annual rings and mistakes,
and male winds in the throat;
in bruises and legends, I come upon
old elms ridden by the hairy sun,
and a bird that sings only on the day of the great forest
twisted on its crutches.
In the chamber made of wattles:
a sleeping dragon, covered by a mad goat;
a handful of horsedung with which I light fire, in the wind.

From the green water in the bowl, upon sight,
there arises, from the smoke, climbing through the ceiling,
towards the stars, a naked white woman, resembling a devil's tit
in which a demand arises.

In front of my bitter face, ashamed village kneels;
while the neighbour's wife cooks acorn brandy for me
and peels wild fruit, I measure fear, fallacies and sins
to the villagers who take oats
upon ritual skin, in a short-lived tale;
by the raven that throws the ball of night into a jug,
and then crouches upon shaman's doorstep, like a dog,
I face the futility of the poem.
My wearied-out poem.

THE WORD

Though we are made from the Word, I did not go
into it, nor did I get used to its power.
In my greed and anger; spiteful and scornful;
hasty; lazy and creepy; rebellious and evil-mouthed,
envious; prone to betraying holy secrets and virtues;
cunning and brother-hating; vain and lying; arrogant; a would-be
poet and believer; indebted by spiritual goods;
braggart and boastful; – I wander through
careless and lawless world, oh God, frequently stepping into
accidental sorrows and woes, like agitated
beasts cheated by false bait, torn apart
by furies, I keep on failing to understand: what
passions have amassed in my heart and how far
brotherly love has gone from me. Oh, if I only could
understand life; I would recognize and reject tricks
and absurdity; I would christen myself and turn
my back to sins, and through recognition of helplessness
I would get serenity – I would besing your eternal and immense
Mercy, oh God, and I would bring all of my efforts into the joy
of the future Letter, knowing that everything is
possible to the intention, supported by even the smallest faith.
Haven't you promised us, oh God, that
„sorrow will turn into joy“, and that „no one
will take your joy from you“. Provide me, then,
with spiritual cross, oh God, carved from
the wood grown on the soil of my heart,
nurtured by your breath, watered by my
stammering prayers, with the hope of help
from your servants; encouraged by acquiring
Your Fear and learned by rejection and scarcity,
prepared to meet Your future Joy.
Support my rising to Your Word, oh Lord.

THE PLEA

1.

Enable me, oh Lord, to besing a psalm,
not just to compose mere letters into a whole.
But endow me with the wisdom of Your
last disciple – the robber to the right
of Your glory – for the degree and feat.
Breathe, oh Breath-giver, so I can feel the fear
from Your holy commandments, and loathe the filth,
the lust for honour, so I never for a moment crave
the worldly glory, and to subdue passion to timidity.

2.

So I can be merry with those who are merry
And sad, joyfully, with those who are sad;
so I can sympathize and be sick with the sick,
and with sinners, to free myself from sins, and repent;
with the repentant, to brace myself, with the fallen
on the Path, to raise and straighten up – oh, Lord.

3.

For I have become rude, vile; stepped deep
into vanity and sin; into rottenness and mud, oh Lord.
In shamelessness I dwelt, and shameless I was.
Where can I wash up my soul, dirty from the mire;
and rotten from sin, my coarsened soul – indebted?
Indebt, oh Lord, prodigal fool, idle fool.

A POEM OF GRATITUDE TO GOD,
EVEN AFTER LOSING MY HOMELAND

How painful it is to sin, and not to loathe sins;
how difficult to serve passions of migrations; to be a fleer
from home, a newcomer to long endurance; to be without hope.
And what can be more precious than soul and homeland, oh God?

In repentance and scarcity, in the loss of remembrance and hope
can one be; not to swear and not to blame anyone,
but humbly, remembering "poor Lazarus",
give a blessing to God?
We yearned for eternal fault, but acquired expulsion and fall.

Should I lose my soul, complaining about God
for what the humble ones are grateful; should I again
utter an ugly and unpleasant word, expecting mercy?
Into foreboding and havoc, easily, like doubt into a mind, we fell.

So what grace should I ask for, smeared
and slandered; homeless and torn, uprooted?
Do I not deserve scorn, humiliation, and sympathy?
Scarce are the paths to salvation; those leading to fall are many.

Translated from Serbian by
Zoran Paunović

SUNČICA DENIĆ

IMAGES OF KOSOVO

(From the novel *The World Outside*)

The Professor

The professor heard stories about confiscated apartments, exiled people and burned houses, robberies and fears. He was not indifferent. He used to say that every house in Ugljar had its own story of everything that had happened and that had been happening over the previous fifteen years. And not just fifteen! Ten times fifteen. And more than that.

He opened the hearts of the suffering people. They vied to tell him their stories that they had been silent about for years. No matter how much he assured them that the primary reason for his coming to their area had been to write down toponyms, as well as certain things related to his research, they came to him with a certain burden, like snails in a wet space, expecting relief or deliverance.

Fieldwork had therefore become his personal preoccupation. What he was asked to do, he did in time. He made a list of everything that could be registered in the onomastic field, with or without legends, and his professional engagement was successfully completed. He finished his research early in the summer semester, but he had a feeling he was still at the beginning. The encounter with this Kosovo town and its surroundings, and with the people there, had become a great personal challenge. He tried to listen carefully, recording names related to agriculture, especially the names of the tools they used to cultivate the land and what they produced, as well as things such as, for example... the description of how the tail of a newly calved cow is tied by twining three threads: red, blue and white. He was confused about what they did to cattle and those cows, but they said that it was to chase away bad luck.

“It isn’t something we made up,” the villagers said. “It has been like that since the days of yore.”

He could not fully grasp the mythical images of everyday life, because no literature, media, films or dreams could supply him with the knowledge that he would encounter in this Kosovo town from the moment he woke up until he went to bed. All his thoughts were on the great suffering he was witnessing. With all those feelings inside, a weekend in Kosovo became spiritual food for him. He did not need either Sirinička Župa or Binačka Morava to collect the material for the report! “This village is my destiny,” he said. It remained as the last line of defense in this particular geographical environment – right next to Priština, optimistic in its splendor. There you went to Ćufta’s tavern, Veljko’s or Drakče’s store. This was where miracles happened. In the village square, right next to the cemetery, it looked as if the ground had opened, the sky had moved, and you could almost hear those who were buried hundreds of years ago breathing there. People did not talk about them anymore in their conversations. They talked of the field in the middle of the village used for big football matches where the wedding parties would stop to perform their famed wedding dances. And since there were ruins of a fourteenth century church in the cemetery, the locals saw it as a legacy from Saint Stephen. The church and village were said to be a metoh of Hilandar, or sometimes, a metoh of Dečani, built to glorify Archdeacon Stephen. The fact that most of the village families celebrated St. Stephen as their patron saint upheld this belief. Many of them also believed that they were descendants of the Saint himself.

In previous years, the people of Ugljar had made a chapel from stones and ancient tombstones that stood in everyone’s way rather than serving their purpose. They dedicated it to Holy Week.

All marriage ceremonies had taken place in that square! Now there was no square. There were barracks in this area – containers for refugees from Kosovo Polje, made for those who did not want to leave Kosovo. A new Container Settlement had been built. What a paradox! Displaced two miles from their homes, stripped of all their possessions. Living in a container. It was enough for them, they said, to sometimes pass by their houses, even though buildings and walls had already been erected there...

Almost everyone knew that Dragorad went to Kosovo Polje every night, before going to bed, with the cap pulled to his nose to hide his face so that none of his Albanian neighbors would recognize him. He walked past his house, and slightly touched that green iron gate with man-made figures he had been making and welding himself for a long

time. He returned at midnight to the metal barrack, located just ten meters away from the Ugljar cemetery.

Those barracks were the most inhumane concoction one could experience! No water and electricity, no heating or cooling... Staying in them condemned the person to die of cold and heat, alone and destitute, in the middle of the village, where the youngest would play football and go wild. And the kids, it seemed out of anger over the fact that it was no longer their land, instead of kicking the ball into the net, kicked it into newcomers' small windows and metal walls, enjoying their anger and disapproval.

Veternik

It is difficult to talk about the displaced of Kosovo Polje in the Container Settlement, those unfortunate people whose now homes were built in a field in Veternik by the charities, in the neighborhood called Bergen. About ten families from Uroševac and Prizren that the Ugljar residents were dissatisfied with settled there. They are poor people, who lost everything. Judging from the way they look and what they say, it is evident that they lived poorly even before the collapse of Kosovo into war and destruction (there is a border between a barely tolerable life and the real world). They had their new homes built for them; in some cases, they were better than the ones they had left in their cities. But, that's not how they see it!

In their silence and God knows what dreams and expectations, they eat what they receive from humanitarians, and they remain silent. They appear not to be sleeping or awake, but just napping, and they seem not to swallow food but chew it constantly, i.e. pick at their food simply because it is mealtime. They don't complain about winter and frost, heat and sun. They don't complain about their accommodation in the middle of a barren field in Veternik, like in the middle of a desert, without a single blade of grass or a tree. Had they planted anything, even hawthorn or dogwood, in their full decade living there, they would have had shade by now. They carry their little chairs around, hiding behind houses, hiding from the sun, seeking shade, while some of them do not even move from where they place themselves in the early morning; they do not look at the time or follow events. They don't seem to know what would be good for them. In fact, they appear to be half-alive, going about their business sluggishly and slowly, unwillingly. This is how they move, talk, eat, drink... They don't try to fit into this new environment, and they don't impose themselves on anyone. They don't show how much they suffer for having left their homes and their cities; how difficult it is for them to be rejected, or rather thrown onto this barren field, to be on a hill, where winds blow constantly. At least they

could offer to do something – for a daily wage. Help someone, beg something. Collect plums, make brandy... And then get drunk with that brandy, for a change... A complete disinterestedness on their part! Only occasionally do some of them move when a passers-by presence distracts them. And ... that is it. It seems that many of them do not even know where they are, the name of the place where they are or its residents...

Like the forgotten ones...

The village administration and the ecclesiastical municipality have designated a site for a new cemetery next to the Bergen settlement. Next to the cemetery, the settlement seems even more immobile and depressing. Only crosses are seen from the settlement. The names and photos on the gravestones appear more distinctive than the signatures they would have written themselves. They have been deprived of everything and those they have once known mean nothing to them. The ones here mean nothing to them either. This is their life: a weakness of the will equates to a quiet death.

Lajoš

In Ugljar, however, they cannot remain indifferent to the black gravestone and the figure on it. It looks as if it had fallen from the sky. It says:

Lajoš Balog – actor.

Anyone who knew nothing about him, as they didn't, would think that he was a homeless drunk, a bohemian and a beggar of no consequence who happened to be buried there. Elegantly stern as he had been, with messy long hair and beard, and clothing that looked as if it had been from centuries ago, always wearing leather boots up to his knees, the actor might as well have been thrown into that poor village to disappear, like everyone disappeared. (If this weren't the case, why would an invisible ghost make a cemetery there for them?)

The half-dead displaced people, settled in Bergen against their will, were terrified by the strangeness of the gravestone. They saw danger in it. And the Ugljar people, who had also been afraid of the man's strangeness (some said the actor had had some perversity in him) had quickly realized that this Rasputin was a high-ranking citizen and that he had not come to kill them, but was there to play with them a little, make them laugh, and then, with considerable pleasure, scorn them.

The arrival of Lajoš Balog, the most prominent actor of the Serbian Theater in Priština, had been an unrivaled act at the time. He was a well-known theater actor, known for his anthological roles, most notably from Vojinović's *Equinox*, ancient tragedians, Shakespeare,

Ibsen, Beckett... He was an unsurpassed character when it came to difficult psychological scenes, apostates and rebels, murderers, heroes and ascetics. There was not much difference between who he was while acting and in real life. Although the most frequently awarded actor at festivals and jubilees, he was, imagine that, exposed to nasty jokes, mockery and threats both in Ugljar and in the displaced persons' accommodation. Dostoyevsky was his favorite writer; he loved Chekhov, Vojinović and Krleža. And he especially loved watching young Ugljar girls milk cows or make bread, which made the Ugljar men, distrustful of him from the first day, very angry.

His visits were not welcomed by the Ugljar people. They feared his stature and wide steps, the pipe that was constantly smoldering, as if he had got it or stolen it from the most dangerous of pirates... He was quite special, different, which bothered the sorrowful and apprehensive locals. On the one hand, he was awe-inspiring while, on the other, his appearance, behavior, imposition, and overt lust provoked disgust.

It appears that Lajoš Balog had the best performances in Ugljar, just as he had the strictest audience there. This audience seemed to have expected him to be an actual people's tribune and leader against the mighty empire rather than a poor hermit who wept over the fate of a worm! Some people simply vied to be in Lajoš's vicinity, to share a table with him in a tavern, casino or at the bookmaker. This especially applied to the Jedinstvo newspaper reporters who followed his career. They knew him from the time of his greatest fame, acting power and reputation among the citizens. Writing about him meant having a good and popular story for the newspaper.

At that time, the younger and slightly older girls of Priština, all intellectuals, painters and poets, as well as the wives of important politicians, were in love with Lajoš. Everyone knew that, all of Priština knew. It was not desirable but it was impossible to hide it; also, it was a sign of one's social importance. Lajoš loved spending time with a mysterious girl from Srbica who lived with her old parents. (He always spoke beautifully about the women he used to love, especially the one he had his son Attila with.) This unusual girl, Mara, abandoned her literature studies in the third year, calling them the banal tackling of literary worlds. She, like most of the students, was delighted with the attitude and knowledge of professor Vuk Filipović. And, like many girls back then, she loved the restless strand of hair over the professor's forehead, à la Mayakovsky.

Lajoš, "crazier" than many of Priština's bohemians, knowing that Mara was in the audience would make a special, longest bow to her at the end of the show. Then, during the summer break, between the two theatrical seasons, he would go and pitch a tent in her meadow. He would

stay there until the fall. He ate what he could pick or hunt; occasionally he would share meals with Mara and her parents.

Years passed, and because of their inability to change anything, their companionship became a years-long dream.

Important roles and challenges were before Lajoš. Mara took care of her old parents for some time on their estate, and at the beginning of the 1999 bombing she left her lonely home, Srbica and Kosovo with her parents. Shortly afterwards, the parents died. They were buried in a displaced persons' cemetery in central Serbia. Then she too left this world, in utmost silence and loneliness, reconciled with the sickness from day one. Breast cancer. She was buried by her relatives and the Istok people from a displaced persons' camp near Belgrade.

Lajoš welcomed 1999 in the same way as Dr. Tomanović, thinking that leaving the apartment and city was not necessary. He believed in cordial familiarity and brotherly relationship with his neighbors, and then barely got out of there alive. This is discussed, among other things, in the collection of short stories *Christ's Witnesses*. In the story, Lajoš Andraš is an aged actor who loses the sense of reality and lapses completely into the world of dreams and theatrical fantasies. A young Albanian, by then a theatrical technician and the actor's close acquaintance, came to take over his apartment, playing the lead role of a strict and implacable executioner for the first time. Although uncomfortable, knowing how intensely all the theatrical characters the actor had ever played still lived in him and what integrity and honour meant, the young Albanian did not give up on the opportunity for foul play against two old friends, in whose homes he had always been a dear guest. The naïve Andraš, always imagining that he was on the theatre scene and not accepting this new harsh reality, acted the scene from the play "The Dresser", ecstatically, full of illusions. And while the actor stammered the lines, Ibrahim assaulted him, clutching his collar: "Fool, do you want a knife under your throat!"

When he asked why he was thrown out of the apartment by people in masks the next day, they told him that it was because he was carrying a weapon. "I do not deny it," said the actor, "but on stage, playing Albanians from Drenica, Rugova, Labljane – beys,¹ merchants, outlaws and avengers, and victims from Peć and Đakovica. Ali Deda, Baškim, Mic Sokoli. Better than the Albanian actors. For a while they called me Andri Drenica. How quickly you have forgotten all about it." Lajoš said that all this would not have happened if Šalja and Šanija, well-known Albanian actors from Priština, were alive. Like many other people at the time, a misconception led Andraš Balat, an actor from

¹ Title in the Ottoman Empire.

the play "The Theatrical Technician" but also a protagonist in real life, to a field in the village of Ugljar. Until the day he was buried in that graveyard, he roamed there with stray dogs, in boots and a beard down to his knees, always grunting: "*Mrekulli (isn't it marvelous)*, I was a better Albanian than half of Drenica."

The Fig

(Cava's story)

"Have a fig!" he said. "Find a reddish one and eat it! It's good for the nerves. It helped me, I managed to sleep."

I have been thinking about his words since Sunday, when I saw him. I had visited Toponica several times to pay him a visit and he never mentioned any fig. He only complained that he couldn't sleep. He slept until midnight, and after ... He laughed, sometimes cried. He cried more. I asked him, why? He was silent. Just shook his head a few times and said:

"You don't know! And it's better that you don't know. Find, if you can, the red fig! It is good for the thyroid and the heart! It's good for everything," he told me.

"Well, why don't you sleep if it's so good?" I asked him, and he said he only tried it once. "I buy them here in the canteen. I buy one pack each day. Mostly I buy the ones in the ring, the ones they used to give us for Christmas. I also buy the ones in different packages: the ones like a necklace, on a string, as well as the ones measured per kilo ... Not a day passes that I don't buy some. I open each one first, to see the seeds. I like to nibble on those little seeds. Sometimes they crack, and I hear that sound ... I often count how many of them there are. I have never counted until the end. I get confused. I always miss some or lose count ... Sometimes I open a fig and take the seeds out, seed by seed. I try to break it in half, to see what the seed is like inside, so tiny and yet it produces such sweet fruits. And healing too ... Only once did I try one with reddish seeds. I can't find it anymore. As if its entire pulp was red... Maybe you can buy them outside the hospital gates, somewhere...!"

He then becomes silent, folding the sleeves that cover his fingers. That is when I ask him why his sleeves are so long, since his shirt is of the right size, and he replies that his hands are often cold. Especially in the evenings. He pulls the sleeves of all of his sweatshirts and T-shirts over his fingers.

"It's easier for me when my hands are inside," he says.

I am silent and my heart breaks. My whole body crumbles when I see him like that, but I don't let myself shed a tear. He is already in enough pain even without my tears. I beg him to think of good things. Not to think only about the bad ones. To understand better what he has and how he lives. I tell him:

“Well, do the others who left Ugljar live better than you? Do the ones who stayed there live better than you? No electricity, no water, no phone ... if they could at least run their errands, like normal people do! You hadn’t been to Priština for almost ten years, where the administrative center is, and the hospital... Everything! Was that the life you wanted? Now you have a good life. You and your family have a new apartment here in Niš now, almost in the city center... with streetlights everywhere... It’s so bright you don’t have to turn on the lights in your apartment...”

I keep listing everything that they have now that they left Ugljar, ever since they sold the house and the estate... and he is silent, scratching the wooden desk in the hospital’s visit room with his nails.

He could enjoy life. He has a few more years before he retires. He receives the “Kosovo allowance” as additional income, and the money from one part of the arable land that he sold to Albanians is still intact. He can send the children to school, he can eat what he wants, have proper health care...He worked at a power plant, I don’t know exactly which one, the first or the second, but I know he was happy there. He did not complain, although Obilić is not very close to Ugljar. He never complained about anything. He worked as an installer, the salaries weren’t that bad, and the company did well ... He always talked about what happened at work. He loved going to work and socializing ... I think he was among the best workers there ...Something happened to him and he ended up in Toponica, the mental hospital. I can’t imagine that anything worse than this can happen to a man. A man in full strength confined to this place! As if he had been predestined to end up like this! Earlier in life, whenever he would do or say something, they would tell him: you’re ready for Toponica, you’re ready for Toponica...! He always joked, did impersonations, all sorts of crazy stuff... Not because he is my brother, but many people in the village loved him. Almost everybody.

“Just find that fig,” he says to silence me and our father. “Many troubles will be solved if we find that fig. It will be good for you too. I am sure that fig would cure you...”

I realize that the moment has come to try to convince him that figs do not cure illnesses. I tell him to listen to the doctors, to take his medications, not to stress out his wife and children, or our father (who is skin and bone), not to worry and not to think about things that were and that will be...People have distanced themselves from him, because of his illness. His children too, his family. Everybody pretends that he is not there. It is difficult to look at someone so restless. After they medicate him, he doesn’t speak a word. He doesn’t look around. As if nobody was there... I tell him that a man always has a reason to be happy

and live. Casting one look at the sun is enough reason for a man to be happy that day...! He remains silent, as if he doesn't hear what we have said. He is happy when he sees that I've come to visit him. I am my brothers' only sister. A sister is a sister... No one can understand you or feel your pain like a sister can... Ever since I left Kosovo, I barely see them. I miss them so much. They must miss me too. That must be the reason why he was so worried when he heard about my problems with the thyroid gland and the heart.

"A fig is all you need, Cave! Just a fig," he tells me. "It's one of a kind! And a fig is a fig! They are all the same, covered with that white powder so you can't tell what they are like. And there isn't a red one!"

"I asked around," I tell him. "Maybe it grows only in faraway lands, where it is always warm...!"

He is silent. He folds the sleeves of his shirt and squeezes his lips as if forbidding words to be spoken. Where did he get that, I keep wondering these days. Did he dream about a red fig, or did someone tell him about it? When we say goodbye at the hospital gates, he tells me in a low voice so that others don't hear:

"If I had stayed there, I would have planted it next to my house, right next to the bedroom window ... It would have grown in no time ... But now..."

He turns around and leaves. I watch him drag his feet in plastic slippers, with his sleeves down to his knees. I can hear that whisper in my ears:

"A fig, Cave, a fig!"

Translated from Serbian by
Jovanka Kalaba

SLOBODAN JOVANOVIĆ

FOREWORD TO THE BOOK OF
DROWNED SMOKES

(Dragiša Vasić, *Drowned Smokes*, Belgrade 1922)

The author of these short stories, Mr. Dragiša Vasić, was about twenty-seven years old in 1912, when our wars began. He spent six years on the front, from 1912 to 1918, as a reserve officer. He went to war as an enthusiastic nationalist. Mr. Vasić belongs to a generation whose arrival had become apparent in our public life somewhere around the annexation crisis, a generation that differed from previous generations, if not because of its greater sense of patriotism, then because of its stronger belief in the strength of the people. Previous generations were burdened by memories of Slivnica and there was something too withdrawn and cautious in their patriotism. This new generation no longer thought about Slivnica and its faith in the “greatness of the Serbs” equalled the faith of the Youth Organization members from the sixties. These young people eagerly awaited world events which would enable them to release this excess of patriotic ardour – and, when in 1912, the war with Turkey began, they crossed the border, as thrilled and cheerful as if they were going to a wedding. This generation had given us the best soldiers in recent wars; its patriotic enthusiasm and unwavering faith in victory contributed, to a great extent, to our conquests on the war front.

The six years of warfare and living in camps caused profound changes in Mr. Vasić. His faith in the Serbian people did not waver; on the contrary, keeping company with our peasant soldiers could only have strengthened his faith. Still, though he did not lose faith in the people, his faith in the military, and the political order of the country had begun to subside. He was of the opinion that, from the moral

standpoint, common soldiers were more valuable than their officers: he had too much admiration for the “humanity and heroism” he had witnessed among the common soldiers; too much anger for the incompetence and unscrupulousness he had seen in some officers. He was simply scandalized by the lack of higher moral sentiments among the politicians standing in the background. At a time when the very survival of the country was at risk, they continued, as if it were peacetime, with their petty arguments and worried about their “emoluments” above all else. Mr. Vasić had moments of doubt and despair, when the entire concept of patriotism seemed like it was just a ploy concocted by an oligarchy, both military and political, in order to use the masses to advance in their careers and for their own profit... Furthermore, the war had lasted much too long; there was no end to the sacrifices the men on the front had to endure. Simple sentimental patriotism was no longer enough to justify them, the men required a more serious, rational explanation. In one of Mr. Vasić’s short stories, a character poses the question: “Is my homeland so justly ordered that it merits losing everything...” As soon as one asks this question, patriotism turns from instinctive love for one’s country to ideological ardour for the principles of human justice in general. Mr. Vasić began thinking about a better social order, a society in which there would be no oppression, neither internal nor external, in which there would be no racial imperialism or tyrannical governments, and which would be ruled by a sense of justice and love for mankind, instead of power and cunning. At the start of the war, Mr. Vasić was a young nationalist with unlimited faith in his nation and its historical mission, but towards the end, he was very close to becoming the type of revolutionary humanist we see today in Romain Rolland.

After demobilization, Mr. Vasić published a very interesting and quite eloquent book: *The Character and Mentality of a Generation*. In this book, he wanted to reconcile his schoolboy nationalism with this broader human idealism that had begun to emerge as a result of his war experiences. Our Serbian nationalism, as Mr. Vasić understands it, does not involve imperialism or the need to conquer; we had joined the World War due to an overwhelming necessity, in order to gain the right to life, which Austria and Germany did not acknowledge; throughout our history, we were forced to defend our existence as a nation from bigger and more powerful nations; and because of this, the belief that every nation has the right to exist, and faith in a democratic human order in which big nations will not be able to oppress small nations, were deeply ingrained in our souls. To reconcile his old nationalism with his new humanism, Mr. Vasić assigned to his nationalism purely “defensive” characteristics and presented it as a way of applying democratic principles to international relations.

Shortly after the publication of this book, Mr. Vasić started his political activity in daily newspapers: first *Progres* and then *Republika*. Convinced that our people are good and our government bad, Mr. Vasić had to be a revolutionary who sought a complete change in the political system. Sceptics and pessimists, who have reservations with respect to the natural goodness of humanity, and who do not idealize their own people, are never revolutionaries. Change political institutions to what? Basic human nature is unchangeable; it is not good – and sooner or later, even the best institutions will be ruined because of it. On the other hand, idealists like Mr. Vasić, who worship humankind and are in love with their people, have to blame all societal shortcomings on bad institutions. Thus, a complete change of institutions becomes an absolute must.

Because of such political writings, Mr. Vasić was persecuted by the government. This man, who had fulfilled his duty to the end during the war, and was seriously wounded, suddenly became a suspicious and dangerous character in the eyes of the government. As punishment, he was called up and sent on a military exercise in Albania... He returned from this exercise with a new book: *Two Months in Yugoslavian Siberia*. This book was supposed to be an act of revenge and retaliation: Mr. Vasić wanted to expose all the wantonness and corruptiveness of his persecutors. But, an interesting note, even though he might have started writing his book as a pamphlet, he went on and turned it into a short story. The effect that the Albanian setting had on him was too strong and interesting; Mr. Vasić forgot about his persecutors and only recorded his impressions. His book became an album of Albanian sketches – and he, who had gone to “Yugoslavian Siberia” as a political writer, returned as a narrator.

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The short stories Mr. Vasić published thereafter can be called war stories. They mostly describe the moral consequences of war. The main character in the story *On a Visit* is an exemplary man, serious, brave, a person of character. He married for love, in a romantic way: his wife ran away to be with him against her parent's wishes. In the midst of family bliss, wars start; as an army reserve officer, he joins the army in 1915 and leaves his family in Serbia. During the occupation, the Austrians hang his father; his sister runs off with an Austrian officer; the wife he married for love, is unfaithful. Upon his return to Serbia, he starts drinking out of humiliation and anguish; becomes an out-and-out alcoholic, and one day, he simply vanishes, but only after he empties the public treasury he was handling.

The moral of this story is quite clear: both our happiness and our honesty depend on the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Were

it not for the war, this man and his family would have had a completely respectable civil life. Because of the war, this force majeure event, they indulge in fornication, alcohol, and commit embezzlement.

Drummer Resimić, perhaps Mr. Vasić's best short story, is a tale about a boza vendor, who becomes a drummer in the military. All his resourcefulness, skilfulness and energy, which go unnoticed during peacetime, are revealed in full glory during war. In his regiment, Resimić is "the maid of all work" in the fullest sense of the word. As a volunteer gravedigger, during the cholera outbreak, he proves to be a real hero; during military operations, he volunteers for picket duty and has the knack for spotting the enemy before anyone else does... But, as he is also a gambler, thief and swindler, he runs away from the military, makes a living as a fake beggar for a while, kills a man, falls into the hands of police, who send him back to the military; retreats across Albania with his regiment, and in a small Albanian village, he is executed by a firing squad for stealing... Up until the war, he was just like any other boza vendor. But the war pushes him into running the entire circle of his passions and abilities – and after revealing every facet of his moral being, he ends his "comedy of life" in Albania, with a bullet in his chest.

The Convalescents consists of a series of images from a military hospital on the Salonica Front. Due to war trauma, all the patients are twisted, some more than others – and each in a different way. Most interesting is the case of a captain, who receives news that his wife has passed away in Serbia. Following the initial shock, he begins thinking about the new life he has ahead of him. Although previously he might have wanted to return to Serbia as soon as possible, now his wish is to stay abroad for the sake of his education – and in order to remain there as long as possible, he begins to fear that the horrible war, which he loathed so much up to that point, would end too soon... Our characters are fluid. We draw certain firmness only from external circumstances. As soon as these circumstances begin to change, our previous "self" begins to waver – and we change from within as well.

In the short story *The Empty Altar*, a loyal and patriotic citizen, who has fulfilled his duties in the war, conscientiously and devotedly, is taken into custody through no fault of his own, but due to a mistake made by the police. The mistake is revealed, but only after the poor man gets a beating. He is set free with a new experience that he simply cannot digest. His way of thinking undergoes a transformation and this peaceful citizen develops rebellious desires... The police have set him on a revolutionary path against his will, the same way war pushed the other characters in Mr. Vasić's stories into a life of vice and crime.

All the stories written by Mr. Vasić provide examples of one and the same idea – that a person can change easily, only not under the

pressure of inner but rather outer factors, which are independent of volition. A person's destiny also determines his character – and he simply accepts it, lacking the option of free choice.

*

Mr. Vasić is not one of those people whose need to write arises from reading the writings of others, and who already have a literary ideal in mind before they start to write. Life itself was what made Mr. Vasić a narrator. The effects of the war were much too strong. He was shaken and tormented by what he had experienced. He turned to writing to free himself from the tyranny of these impressions, without an established form, more or less by luck. For this reason, there is something self-sown in his stories, similar to the first writings of Janko Veselinović and Borisav Stanković.

No matter how self-sown, Mr. Vasić's short stories remain, for the most part, within the tradition of our realistic short-story genre. Their strength lies in the observations, which are sharp, witty, and often sarcastic. In spite of all his humanist compassion and rebellious ill humor, Mr. Vasić's stories often include comical scenes, as well as comical characters, who oftentimes remind us of Stevan Sremac and his powerful, wide-ranging caricatures. These comical scenes and characters best demonstrate the realism in Mr. Vasić's works.

Still, this does not mean that Mr. Vasić simply adheres to the habits of the realistic short-story genre written before the war. He introduces some novelties as well.

First of all, he introduces a freer narrative structure and a more nervous style of writing. The narrative structure was never our authors' strong point. Just like in the case of creating a state or creating a town, we also proved to be a nation of peasants, lacking higher constructive ability, in creating a short story. But, although our narrators lacked strong narrative structure, their stories were told linearly, and without jumping forward and back. In Mr. Vasić's works, this narrative unity almost completely vanishes. His short stories are a series of snapshots, which are sometimes connected, but not always. In his short story *On a Visit*, the first scene in the train has virtually no connection with the rest of the story; in *Drummer Resimić*, some moments from Resimić's military life follow one after the other without being linked and without an explanation; in *The Convalescents*, each convalescent has his own completely separate history, and the only link between them is that they are all in the same hospital. Each story, written by Mr. Vasić, has an obvious basic plot, only the structure of this plot is unconnected and fragmented.

But, the unusual vibrancy of individual scenes compensates for this lack of composition. These scenes may be only pieces of the story, but they sparkle and quiver, teeming with life. Mr. Vasić has a distinctive manner of expression filled with nervous curtailments and leaps; a *tempo* that is quick, breathless, fiery (this *tempo* can be sensed only in certain scenes; if we observe the story as a whole, we will encounter breaks, turns, inserted thoughts and speeches). None of our prewar realists show such nervousness. Even Borisav Stanković shows more sensuality than nervousness, and his *tempo* reflects Oriental calmness. Mr. Vasić adds to the realistic short-story genre a completely new, electric spark.

His nervous narrative style is intensified by the fact that he is not a cold, impersonal observer, like most of the prewar realists. The ladder stood before the outside world as if it were a template they needed to copy realistically, without adding anything of their own. Essentially, they would study a given social environment; search for interesting and colorful characters from a coldly inquisitive distance... Mr. Vasić did not adopt the impersonal approach of his predecessors. He threw himself into his stories with his whole being; poured into them all his doubts, all his pain and anger. One can sense a personal tone in his narrative; basic personal emotions – grief and rebelliousness. This creates a subjective atmosphere, something our realistic short-story genre never had before... Like all realists, Mr. Vasić likes to describe unusual characters, only he does not stop at their colorful silhouette. He goes on to immerse himself in the moral aspects. Their destiny serves as a motive to reflect on the fate of humanity in general, and pose questions about social order, moral obligations and the meaning of life. His empathy and compassion give his stories an almost Russian trait.

To summarize, in this first phase of his narrative writing, Mr. Vasić appears to be a realist who bases his work on exterior influences, only in his case, these influences are too strong and painful; he is unable to control himself and process these impressions “gracefully”, so he simply throws them on paper with a sort of crude directness. On top of all this, we also have here a troubled conscience, doubts with respect to established moral values, and a yearning for broader human idealism. The overstimulated impressionism and inner turmoil constitute the main distinguishing quality of Mr. Vasić’s short stories – and he will probably be known for introducing to our realistic short-story genre the wartime nervousness of his generation.

Translated from Serbian by
Persida Bošković

MILO LOMPAR

GROTESQUE CHARACTERS IN DRAGIŠA VASIĆ'S STORIES

When, in 1932, he singled out the characters of Resimić the drummer and Jaćim Medenica as the most plastic shaped characters of Vasić's prose (I, 337), Milan Bogdanović indirectly sketched another of their identities: his cognition from 1922 that "the whole figure of Resimić Sekula, both grotesque and tragic" (I, 306) coincided with his knowledge, from the year 1932, that in Jaćim Medenica, "all the exhilarating tragicomic character of our average man" (I, 338) was stereotyped. Although both stories represent *portraits*, what binds their connection into a common node is the potential presence of the *grotesque* in them. The question is whether the grotesque characters are the ones that make connection between them, or if these stories are grotesque *despite* their thematic diversity? If the stories are grotesque, what elements of the grotesque are affirmed by their diversity? If the stories are not, however, grotesque, whether they contain something identical which prevents them from being so? The status of *grotesque* in Vasić's narratives is crucial for understanding of their *modernity*, because the modern epoch, as one of the three epochs "which can no longer believe in the holistic picture of the world and the inviolable order of the previous times," is a reliable narrative horizon for the density and seriousness of the grotesque articulations.¹ The grotesque could, therefore, be the detector of the poetic hierarchy of modern elements in Vasić's storytelling. Does the grotesque in Vasić's stories imply playing with the absurd?² Is the staged world of stories an "alienated world"?³ Is there

¹ Wolfgang Kaiser, "Trying to define the essence of the grotesque," translated by Aleksandra Bajazetov, *The Word*, Belgrade, year II, number 10, June 1995, 75.

² *Trying to define the essence of the grotesque*, 75.

³ *Trying to define the essence of the grotesque*, 75.

in the quality of the grotesque that stories express something “inconceivable, impersonal” that builds such a world and distinguishes it from the tragic world?⁴ What kind of laughter creates the presence of the grotesque in the narratives?? Can one recognize in the narrated world a trace of a “dogmatically fixed idealistic moment” whose loss into the abyss⁵ creates a grotesque? So, is some kind of implied idealness which in the appearance of reality is being deformed in the direction of evil? In the analysis of the grotesque potential of Vasić’s stories, it is heuristically important to distinguish character’s grotesqueness, because those are portrait-dominated stories, from the grotesqueness of the world, which is the background on which the central character of the story is being recognized.

The peculiarity of the narrative optics in Resimić the drummer (1921) is expressed by the decision that the two separate and isolated situations from Resimić’s life were to be put at the beginning of the story but from one moment onward storytelling starts being linearly organized. The described scenes of the drummer’s report (II, 59-62), troop bivouac (II, 63), different experiences from wars (II, 64-65) and youthful experiences (II, 66-70) are related to each other by the hero’s *character*, because they emphasize the same existential foundation of various moments of his life, while the experience from 1915 (II, 71-72) marks a twist in the narration – although that twist does not have a decisive meaning for the character itself – after which the murder was committed (II, 72-76) and further war experiences are narratively organized using chronology. It is as if the narrator wants to sketch the hero’s portrait first, and then his destiny, which culminates in his death. Although the beginning of the story is static and timeless, during its flow and specially after the twist it became dynamic and temporal. The world in the first part of the story exists as a bit of the background on which the drummer’s character gets more and more precise and definite features, in order to recognize himself in the second part of the story as an independent and fatal hero’s antagonist: this narrative independence of the world becomes the most pronounced at the moment of Resimić’s death, as the story continues and after that event, though the story is being centralized by the hero’s character.

Two elements build the grotesque potential of Resimić’s character: the drummer’s physical and spiritual monstrosity and the way of his acting in the world. The hero is created as someone who exists on the other side of good and evil, because when he searches “through a

⁴ *Trying to define the essence of the grotesque*, 75.

⁵ Otto von Best, “The Grotesque in Poetry,” translated by Aleksandra Bajazetov, *The Word*, Belgrade, year II, number 10, June 1995, 78.

stinging bivouac full of scattered straw and all sorts of debris and... poking it around with a flail and searches” (II, 62), then that picture of his activity exists in collusion with the monstrosity of his physical characteristics: “Short in stature, with shaggy and matted, long hair on a huge pockmarked head, with short and crooked legs, through which, when standing in a ‘calm’ position, a fatty would effortlessly slip through without touching them ... in an old remodelled military blouse with oily, once red, bright and tight non-commissioned trousers always unbuttoned and buttonless ... stuttering and desperately struggling while speaking, his face deforms, writhes, horribly stumbles, opening and closing his big, herpetic mouth as if yawning, letting out with difficulty, with a scent of garlic and saliva that sprays, a few words, and then starts choking up again.” (II, 60) Thus, the image of his actions is neither an image of a soldier’s life as such, nor it is an image that emphasizes the hero’s tragedy and poverty, but rather a sign of his existential alienation that has no echo in the moral register. Therefore, neither that Resimić is *like that* is terrible, nor it is a sign that something in the world in which he exists is terrible, but that he is *like that* and there is nothing terrible about it, even though everything is monstrous and alienating. This alienation is not, however, a hyperbolic picture of something that is turned upside down in the world, it is a realistic picture of something that is self-explanatory in its alienation: there is no question *why* this is so, but rather the question would arise over the eventual amazement of such a character of Resimić the drummer. No presumption of human dignity, nor the idea of eventual humanity, reside in Resimić’s mind (II, 66), who “slapping, tying or prison ... considers inevitable military ration like rice, beans, tain, short shirt or šajkača” (II, 66): that kind of hero’s beyond morality builds the strange existential foundation for his character that has grotesque elements. There is some kind of existential provocation in Resimić that makes one of the commanders “outraged to raving madness” (II, 61) and the other one “outraged... to the extent that he, becoming green with anger, beat him to the utmost exhaustion of his rested strength” (II, 78). Neither drummer’s offenses nor his deceits are what infuriate the commanders because they are just the *cause* for their ferocity since there is some kind of allowance in Resimić himself for beating him, which originates from his acceptance of those beatings. Hence, the world does not pay attention to the supposed humanity in Resimić, because the drummer himself does not count on that humanity, as his physical monstrosity betrays it as well. The origin of the world’s neglect is Resimić’s amorality itself, which makes beating permissible and unproblematic. That kind of amorality means the commander’s beating the drummer does not violate the principles of good and evil, but it also means that when the drummer

commits crimes and murders, he does not subject to those principles as well. That would be the final point of the grotesque potential of Resimić's character, for he incorporates in it the world standards of his actions. The monstrosity of this character is an expression of his serene immorality (pp, 66), which creates his grotesque potential.

However, is there anything in Resimić that contradicts this vicious circle of monstrosity and amoralities? In the narrative there is a constant *negative* attitude towards the world, which is outlined on the background of Resimić's character: when the world condemns the drummer's monstrosity, then Resimić is addressed by using the terms "twerp", "scumbag, bastard, creep" (II, 61), "you, drumming scumbag", "you, drumming pig", "you, thug"(II, 63), but when the world needs him, then Resimić becomes someone who is addressed as "bro", "mate", "for god's sake", "for goodness sake"(II, 62). Although the world also appears to be beyond moral, its power is more inferior from Resimić's serene immorality, since the drummer never asks anything from the world, while the world always asks something from him. Although with the title of the short story Resimić directs the reader's understanding, relating the explicit narrative interest to the strangeness of the drummer's character, the narrative itself repeats, however, certain contrast in which the drummer's character is just a participant: a permanent narrative contrast is created between Resimić and the world in which the negative part is assigned to the world and not to the killer's character. The narrative perspective schematically connects the character of the villain and the murderer with the world which is worse than him, slapping and tying Resimić to the pole has its narrative point in the fact that Resimić "knows ... that it is not the crown prince he is cheering, but it represents a kind of rebellion, for which nothing is to be done about," which causes" the commander to appear at the window and order the fool to be released"(II, 61). The hypocrisy of the one who slams Resimić – hinted in the socially motivated contrast where "a dozen of frostbitten soldiers ... with snow on their moustaches and eyebrows" are waiting for "the commander, who in the warm Turkish room signed the mail" (II, 59) – serves as a stylization of the collusion between monstrosity of the hero and the world: Resimić makes visible the invisible freakishness of the world. Just as the narrative focus is not on the description of how the commander "whips the drummer and the loaded stuff" that the hero carries, but onto the fact that then "the soldiers from the back of the grid are turning...timidly and villainously smiling" (II, 63), in the same way, it is important for the narrator to emphasize that not only the world is worse than Resimić who is a criminal and a murderer, but that Resimić is better than the world: while he "tells the soldiers how he personally buried the whole regiment in the midst of a cholera contagion

when he voluntarily joined those who were burying the dead, they stayed away from him as if he could still infect them”(II, 64). Just as Resimić is the paradoxical face of the world, so the world is a mirror of the hero’s immoral morality: even as an immoral being, the drummer behaves in the world following the principle of Christian pity and compassion. However, he behaves like that because, in cholera contagion, he is not afraid of death, even though he has no confidence in the Christian sense of death. The drummer, then, exists as a *simultaneous* being of morality and monstrosity, which is another pole, that can be reconstructed from Resimić’s relations with the world, in relation to the whirl of immorality and deformity that builds the hero’s character: the paradox of the drummer’s character is that even when he acts as Christian morally and sacrificially he is *at the same time* someone who is on the other side of good and evil. That Resimić is somehow narratively more comprehensive than a retarded being, a criminal and a murderer is shown through the event that causes the irreversible upheaval in the storytelling: in the old woman’s complaint that he “disgraced” her granddaughter, are mentioned “those who brought him” (II, 71) as a physician, which means that the world with its normal and Christian-moral background, participates in Resimić’s perversity. The decisive moment was the old woman’s hesitation to report the fraud as soon as it happened, because “they rushed at me, so we firstly reconciled: to buy slippers for the girl by noon, and a scarf for me, but the bum cheats, so here I am now” (II, 72). So, the old woman is not accusing Resimić of “disgracing” her granddaughter, but for not *reimbursing* her: her granddaughter’s disgrace originates, therefore, from the drummer’s commercial unreliability. Those with whom she made a bargain were left out of the old woman’s condemnation which just focused onto the *bum*. The very narrative variation of the contrast between Resimić and the world has the socio-political and existential motivation since the fluctuation between these motivations is constant in Vasić’s narrative prose. When a “rich lady” (II, 73) – in the war interregnum – bestows Resimić who has turned into a beggar, then the narrative reflection puts that act into socio-moral perspective: “as the poodle dances around her by twitching the edge of her skirt with its tiny teeth, she hurries toward another place of sadness, with the expression of the increasing pain and suffering of a saintly woman” (II, 74). The narrator’s irony implies the existence of some morality that the lady’s behaviour merely simulates, so in relation to that morality, Resimić’s lies and desertion represent the same offense as the behaviour of his benefactor. As the world falls *lower*, Resimić becomes *worse*, which means that the disturbance of the foundation on which both Resimić and the world exist is wide-ranging. However, the murder committed by the drummer (II, 76) has

no social but existential background: from the character full of plundering and farcical features – as described in the first part of the story – Resimić grows into a criminal and a murderer. There was an equalization in the mutual immoral overtaking between the drummer and the world, but Resimić's evil remained illegitimate in the world. The monstrosity of the world, however, is not the same as the drummer's immorality, since the critically and polemically shaped vulgarity of the world represents narrative disabling of the grotesque. While Resimić's immorality is a kind of neutrally formed storytelling as an expression of some alienated predestination and some impersonal and abyssal evil, the monstrosity of the world is given in precise critical articulation that neutralizes its grotesque potential for it names the social and wartime origin of the world evil.

What in the narrator's choice decides that, right before the shooting, Resimić refuses to confess (II, 79)? Such a decision made by a buffoon, a criminal and a murderer implies some kind of connection between his physical and moral monstrosity and the face of the world. The very narrative choice in which Resimić refuses to confess has a special poetic weight because it actualizes a motif that is equally constitutive for both the realistic novelistic word (*Red and Black*) as well as the novelistic word of modern times (*Stranger*). The reader, therefore, is directed to some kind of meaningful over-emphasis of a motif that exists as paradigmatic for the ontological experience of the nineteenth and the twentieth-century prose: what connects those so different poetic articulations in that particular motif is the fact that this motif by itself is directed toward the experience of God. That experience determines the boundary possibility of *modernity* since the death of god implies the recognition of modern: so Stendal's narration may include the onset of the boundary moment of the modern within his motif, while Camus's molding of that motif examines the meaning of the death of god in its consequences.⁶ What determines the choice of narrator which exists in *Resimić the Drummer* could, however, have more precise origin: Dragiša Vasić, 1934, mentioned that F. M. Dostoyevsky "survived the experience of the death penalty" (IV, 218), which suggests that the famous scene of Dostoyevsky's execution, consisting of refusing to confess, kissing the cross and seeking pardon, is implied in the meaningful register of the *Idiot*,⁷ as described in *Crime and Punishment*, a feeling of "full and powerful life" that was "similar to the feeling of

⁶ Dušan Pirjevec, "The Crime of Julien Sorel", translated by Gojko Janušević, Yearbook of Matica Srpska, Novi Sad, vol. 146, Vol. 405, Vol. 5, May 1970, 548-549.

⁷ Nikola Milošević, *Dostoyevsky as a Thinker*, Partisan book, Belgrade, 1981, 333-334.

being sentenced to death and to whom suddenly and unexpectedly a pardon had been announced”⁸ could also have been present in the narrative consciousness that outlines the unusual scene of Resimić’s death. The decision of Resimić the drummer, which is situated in the web of implications, definitely moulds the grotesque as the *potential* of his character and realizes a decisive turn from the grotesque into the meaningful register of the story. What is determining in Resimić’s decision itself exists in storytelling as something *by default*, not explicit: when he remained “without a few ribs” incapable for “military service” (II, 77) Resimić was “passionately committed to his duty of taking care of the Commander’s mare Ruža, whose slender, cuddly and naughty foal interested him more than anything else” (II, 77). The fact that in the war whirlwind, Resimić is not interested in the outcome of the war corresponds to his moral indifference, but that he is interested in the fate of the “foal” indicates the arrival of the certain capacity of *humanity* in this character. Socially-motivated character of Resimić’s commander, who “was sent here to fulfil the conditions for promotion to the higher rank” (II, 77), clashes with Resimić as he learns that “several boxes of canned milk” (II, 77) have disappeared which was entrusted to Resimić for safekeeping. Resimić *firstly* says that the milk was “eaten by ‘Ruža’” (II, 78), *then* indirectly admits that he was lying, so that *in the end*, the narrator points out that “the lie that was stupid” (II, 78) that it took the drummer to the situation in which the commander beat him “to the extreme fatigue of his rested power” (II, 78). Their later *bargain*, due to which “every morning ... the commander would feel how his nostrils were tickled and stimulated by the smell of young, roasted chicken... spreading all around out of the saddlebag of a German saddle” (II, 78), however, that casts shadow on the default layer in moulding Resimić’s character: only when he thinks that the one who is able to obtain roast chicken in spooky gorges of suffering and starvation daily is not someone to whom it is necessary to drink canned milk, the reader can recognize the truth in Resimić’s answer that “Ruža” ate milk, because *then* he remembers how Resimić loved her foal “more than anything”. This strengthens the *humane* feature in the killer’s character. Its paradox is that it only becomes visible in the hero’s role as a *chicken boy*, which, however, originates from his farcical and thieving qualities. The sense of finding a humane feature in Resimić’s character is in accordance with the growing narrative denigration of the world, but this sense irreversibly *humanizes* the farcical-criminal dimensions of Resimić’s character and leaves the meanings of the grotesque in the *potential* register of that character. These implications meet Resimić’s response

⁸ *Crime and Punishment*, 224.

at the time when he refuses to confess: "I'm on better terms with God ...than you, preach" (II, 80).

At the moment when he responds like this, "and spits on the preach" (II, 80), Resimić decides to experience the ultimate consequence of his bargain with the commander: he proves to be a commercially reliable partner who does not reveal his client. But that bargain is only a consequence of the milk that "Ruža" ate: as if her foal was a reason good enough for Resimić not even to try to save himself because it "interested him more than anything" in his life. The refusal to confess is not an image of Resimić's belief in his own innocence, but a *contempt* for the world in which he is shot by those who "are calmly treating themselves with roasted chicken for which one soldier is shot as a robber" (I, 306). The judgment of Milan Bogdanović overstated the critical potential of the image of Resimić's execution because he saw the hero just as "a soldier", although Resimić is a *special* soldier who did not become but is a robber. Bogdanović, however, precisely sensed the growing criticality of the narrator's articulation, which neutralizes the grotesque potential of the story itself. The fact that he remained "unburied", who boasted that he himself buried the whole regiment" (II, 80) narratively emphasizes that the contempt which Resimić sent to the world in the crucial moment has an epochal basis. When Resimić's commander offers the general to take "some chicken" that "I bought yesterday in Preza" (II, 82), the reader *knows* that it is a stolen chicken, but the narrator's solution leaves multiple possibilities: the truth is that Resimić is a chicken boy and a murderer, as well as the truth is that the world is existentially identical with him, but socially – hypocrisy – different from him. When he refuses to confess, Resimić denies to admit that the world is superior to him. If he knows that the world is the same with him, then his refusal to confess would signify his awareness that the god has left the world which unauthorizedly laid claim to God. The radicalism of Resimić's decision is that he extends his knowledge of the world to spaces that are outside the world because he knows that even in the sky "one must ... wrangle" (II, 79). Although being socially motivated, Resimić's refusal to confess is aimed at the ontological overturn that has happened.

What does the narrator's reaching out for a precise intertextual marker tell us about? Namely, Dragiša Vasić explicitly brought together one situation from Resimić's military biography to the experience of the Cossack Shapovalov (II, 65). It is a hidden clue, because the focus is of Vasić's parallel on the *situation* in which he introduces Resimić the drummer, and which is a paradigmatic example for the Tolstoy's understanding of history, not of the hero's *character*, because Shapovalov does not even exist as an authentic character of Tolstoy's storytelling,

but as a narrative tool of his understanding of history. Thus, Resimić's character would be a complement to the meaningful changes that Vasić – by drawing such a parallel – brings to this understanding of history. However, the parallel itself inaccessibly involves *War and Peace* into the horizon of Vasić's storytelling, and the closeness of Resimić the drummer to the authentic Tolstoy's hero, named Tihon Krezavi, emerges suddenly. That closeness, outlined by character description, reveals Vasić's story as a kind of perspectival answer on Tolstoy's storytelling. Resimić has a "huge pockmarked head" and "short and bow legs" (II, 60), as Tihon has a "pockmarked and wrinkled face" and "bow legs",⁹ but that is why Tihon appears as "a man wearing something red," because Resimić also wears "bright red" (II, 60). While Resimić does not "carry a rifle" (II, 63), Tihon carries a rifle "more for the sake of laughter", since Resimić always makes his comrades "giggle, laugh" (II, 62). As Resimić is addressed as "scumbag, bastard, creep", "twerpy twerp", "you, drumming pig", "you, thug", so Tihon is also addressed as "you, blockhead", "you, trouble-maker", but as Tihon is "cheerful and pleased with himself," merriment never leaves Resimić, nor "his fine and cheerful temper" (II, 66). Tihon first did hard work as lighting the fire, carrying water, grooming horses, "which are Resimić's constant duties, for he is continually commanded: "hold the horse," "run for water," "make a fire" (II, 63). Tihon, then, "showed great will and capacity for partisan warfare," because he "went ... at night to plunder, and each time brought back French robes and weapons, and when ordered, he brought prisoners as well." Resimić always went voluntarily on patrol "because he never returned empty hands from it" (II, 64), so that passion for robbery led him to the situation of the Cossack Shapovalov. Who, then, is Tihon? He had "a special, extraordinary place in Denis's squad" so "when something very difficult and nasty had to be done ... everyone smiled and pointed at Tihon," who was "the most useful and courageous man in the squad." Tolstoy says that. Although Resimić will be "the first to smell the enemy, the first to figure out valuable information and the first to return to his place" (II, 64), as "in the midst of cholera infection, in Veles ... he voluntarily helps nurses" (II, 63). Vasić *will not* say that he is the most useful and courageous man in the squad. Tihon's characteristics are framed by Tolstoy's understanding of the organic origin of partisan warfare, which relies on the natural strength of the people, while Vasić builds the character of his hero, which intensifies two of Tihon's characteristics, isolates Tolstoy's narrative shadows,

⁹ This character of Tolstoy's appears just in one place of *War and Peace*, as an episodic detail, so all the quotes have the same reference: Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, IV, translated by Milovan and Stanka Glišić. Belgrade, Prosveta, Belgrade 1974, 144-149.

magnifies their range, and thus creates the grotesque potential of his character. Peća Rostov will feel something unpleasant at the moment when he “suddenly understood that Tihon had killed a man,” and this indifferent readiness to kill, despite the hero’s cheerful innocence, is revealed in Resimić the drummer (II, 76). In the wake of that thought, Peća Rostov “looks back at the captured drummer and something touches his heart”: his anxiety arose from *linking* Tihon’s readiness to kill and the possibility that captured French drummer could be killed. This connection between Tihon’s character and the French drummer, which upsets Peća Rostov, might have been a signal for the decision to link together Tihon’s characteristics in Resimić with the job of the drummer. The basic detail of Tolstoy that Vasić develops is the fact that Tihon was “a buffoon to all Cossacks and Hussars” who “gladly accepted that title”. Vasić places this characteristic of a buffoon on the dominant place of his narrative interest, suppresses Tolstoy’s tendency to merge already marked Tihon’s characteristics in the background of partisan war and emphasizes the epochal resonance between Resimić’s buffoon’s feature and his consciousness which denies to confess. Contrary to Tolstoy’s idea that Tihon, with all the malice of his character, is in harmony with the environment in which he acts, Vasić creates a character that, by his grotesqueness, not only is not in harmony with the world in which he acts but is killed by that world. That moment expresses the tragic potential of Resimić’s character, while there is no such potential in the character of Tihon. The tragedy itself stems from the growing narrative criticality towards the world, which, however, prevents that the hero’s grotesqueness becomes the dominant principle of Resimić the drummer.

The world of stories is not, therefore, a grotesque world, for storytelling is organized through the gradual suppression of grotesque moments in favour of critical-tragic moments. The grotesque potential of the character is gradually transformed during the storytelling into the critical potential of learning about the world. The absurd moments in the actions of the hero are narratively covered by the critical moments that are directed towards the face of the world. The impersonal basis of the hero’s monstrosity and immorality is dissolved into the social-critical and tragic basis of his death. What is terrifyingly funny in Resimić’s personality is being transformed into a tragic moment of the injustice of his death. When he denies to confess, Resimić recognizes that the world of “dogmatically fixed moment” has disappeared into the abyss, but the narrative articulation of his death suppresses the grotesque for the benefit of a godless world but wants to fill his place with a metaphysical change of *ethics*. Modern consciousness of a buffoon, chicken boy, and the murderer with his knowledge on the death

of God is narratively suppressed in favour of the tragic consciousness of modern feeling of life that counts on filling the place of the dead god. The grotesque is, therefore, too modern for the tragic sense of modern feeling of life in *Resimić the Drummer*, that is, however, the narrative configuration of the grotesque elements of the character and the tragic moments of the world in which the character exists.

There is an indirect but conscious deflection related to the story *The Death of Jaćim Medenica* (1931). In *the Empty Altar* (1922), this is the only one in the collection *The Blown out Cressets* that socially-critically thematizes the post-war experience, although it also has a developed register of war motifs. That story could indicate a change in Vasić's narrative optics in the direction of social-critical articulation: that is also met by the realization that the story itself is dedicated to Miroslav Krleža. The comical appearance of Jaćim Medenica's wife returning "from these mindset festivities" is illuminated in a poetically precise comparison: "so screwed-up, all shaken and hoarse as if she had dragged herself straight from Glavnjača" (II, 238). While the word "Glavnjača" here refers to the capital's festivities, celebrations and manifestations, which means that it was used to enhance the comic register of storytelling by its inadequacy, the story *In the Empty Altar* describes the torture and tragic experience of the hero in Glavnjača that has socio-political motivation. The change in the consciousness that implies the image of Glavnjača marks a possible change in the poetic principle of Vasić's narrative horizon: the tragic meaning of this word gets meanings of comic provenance, as the engagement is suppressed in favour of a potentially grotesque effect. What consciousness felt like close – the tragic and undeserved suffering of Petronije Sivilar – becomes only a distant reflex of her memory, which, moreover, is being restyled in the opposite direction. The narrative effort to explain *why* certain terrible and tragic experience are being replaced by understanding of that experience as comical. This metamorphosis of Vasić's narrative optics must also involve the grotesque potential of his characters.

In the background of Jaćim Medenica's character, there is wartime experience, according to which he "surrendered to the enemy and shamefully left firing squad" (II, 241), which, according to his interpretation means that he "fought and bled" (II, 242). The narrative optics relativized the very significance of the war procedures, but their usefulness remained preserved because it was precisely Jaćim's curiosity "whether it was worth all those terrible wounds of ours" (II, 242) that made him agree to watch the falcon ceremony. Since the war, therefore, remained a vaguely sense of prick of conscience that has been covered by everyday rhetoric: the negative attitude of Jaćim Medenica to "all

divine parades and ceremonies” springs “from the depth of the soul” (II, 239), but on the falcon ceremony itself “he completely lost the Serb-man form, succumbing completely to that blind element that the dangerous flame had flared in him” (II, 250). Thus, in Jaćim Medenica dwells someone who “from the depths of the soul” denies parades and someone in whose soul is hidden “blind element” distorting him on the parade itself. Hence, Jaćim’s denial of the parades would mean a fear of the blind element which rules him secretly. But Jaćim’s character did not develop this demonic feature of his own duality, because the meaning of that duality was not found in psychological but in the narrative function. Jaćim Medenica, unlike Resimić the drummer, is not at the beginning of the story created as a grotesque character, but it *becomes* one within the storytelling. While the physical and spiritual monstrosity that reveals the Grotesque feature in Resimić the drummer is present at the very beginnings of the story, the pettiness which, sketched at the beginning of the story, allows the grotesque potential of Jaćim’s character, having a foundation in Jaćim’s stupidity that enables him to advise with full seriousness: “Instead of legally acknowledging me as a man warrior and a husband, and even give me peasant shoes if I ask; as our glorious grandfathers used to give to the Turks and flattered their masters. (II, 241) While Resimić’s monstrosity is terrifying by itself, Jaćim’s limited pettiness makes people laugh. That is why Resimić’s grotesqueness dissolves in tragic and Medenica’s in comic effect. The storytelling itself is a description of the internal and external metamorphoses that affect the character of Jaćim Medenica: while at the beginning of the parade, Jaćim was “wisely calm and serious, except that his bug-eyed eyes ... were welled up a little more” (II, 244), so that “on his face there was a kind of peculiar pleasure ... but very restrained” and “he could feel he was given a kind of patriotic willies” (II, 244), while *during* the parade”, Jaćim himself and against his will... screeched” (II, 245) and irrevocably felt that he “has to express his sincere Serbian soul, in which, out of a pile of ashes, the entire living fire suddenly started to rekindle” (II, 246). The narrator’s irony which accompanies the description of Jaćim’s transformations reveals that they have no depth-psychological register, as Jaćim’s dazzlement with the size of the parade does not indicate any kind of thirst for greatness in his petty nature and everyday life. The direction of that irony does not, however, decide its degree: if that irony suppressed the significance of the question of *why* Jaćim had transformed, as well as the questions *what* is it in him that prepared and enabled that transformation, it surely indicated the importance of the question *for what* narrative purpose Jaćim’s distortion happened? Resimić’s grotesqueness is polemically focused onto the world, but Jaćim’s transformation into emblazed and

grandiose pettiness does not target the truth about the world. This transformation turns Jaćim into the hero of the falcon festivities and takes him from the spectator stage to the actor stage, as Jaćim begins not only to participate in the falcon procession on the street (II, 247-248), but also becomes the central figure to whom the eyes of all the spectators are turned (II, 250). The falcon festivities, however, are representative substitution of a former war in which Jaćim's role was shameful and humble: sudden Jaćim's transformation into their participant is a representative substitution of his former war participation. As the war diminished and became reduced onto the Falcon festivity, so Jaćim grew big into its main participant. This epochal and individual inversion underlies Jaćim's transformation and marks the changes in the narrative optics of Vasić's stories: the war ceases to be direct and becomes an indirect pressure on the behaviour of the heroes of those stories. This means that the meaning of the war becomes secondary, derivative and figurative. It is now the war that *figures* as a falcon ceremony, just as Jaćim-the warrior also figures as Jaćim-a parade participant. Jaćim's animosity towards the parades was, therefore, caused by his fear of his own image in the war, which the parades can restore in him, but his participation in the parade revealed that as there is no war, there is no more his image of the war, but only their *figurations*.

In these figurations, "as beside himself, as against himself, as good grief, Jaćim screamed out so that everybody around him was stunned" (II, 246), and then "increasingly thunderously, more devotedly, and somehow more eagerly" (II, 247), because Jaćim realizes that the figuration is in action in which his contribution must be consistent with the story of his own behaviour in the war: Jaćim in the parade equates his narrative figuration with his presenting figuration, because he becomes a figure of his own storytelling. In the description of Jaćim's transformational stages, the narrator emphasizes their excessiveness, but his distant interventions imply Jaćim's discovery: "as good grief," which signifies that something both to that the place and to everyday Jaćim, penetrates his voice inappropriately, as "more eagerly" reveals the distant narrative origin of Jaćim's reactions. The narrator's ironies of Jaćim's gestures imply an excessive passion and bitterness of Jaćim's war stories that make him see at the moment of festivity not only the ceremony but the war as well, turning into a caricature: "He falls more and more into a temper and puffs up, his neck veins swell like varicose veins on his legs, so his voice almost hoarse, so instead of: 'Hello, hello, hello, hello', it is heard: woof, woof, woof, woof for four times!" (II, 248) Jaćim is a figure on the sidewalk who is the figuration of narrated participation in the war: the political content of Jaćim's loud thoughts that last during the parade are the figurations of the political

context in which the narrated war is understood. If the reader *sees* Jaćim and the parade, he must think of them as the foreground of the background on which he recognizes the war that thematizes Vasić's earlier prose: the narrator's irony towards Jaćim Medenica directs the reader to the knowledge of the disinterested caricature of Jaćim's character in whose background one finds, however, the picture of the war. This poetic deviation decisively marks Dragiša Vasić's narrative evolution: if Jaćim Medenica's character is understood solely in his characterization description, then a change of perspective is overlooked which allowed the hero's caricature to be recognized, for Jaćim's grotesqueness becomes pronounced against the background of Dragiša Vasić's war stories. Jaćim Medenica is not, therefore, merely a characterological study of the grotesque distortion of the so-called little man, but on the background of that study, there happened a re-figuration of that existential nightmare that the war created. It is the highest point which was won by his character's grotesque potential.

The grotesque characters of Resimić the drummer and Jaćim Medenica – who “has already turned his head like a dog when it yowls” (II, 248) and one can only see his mouth opening and making some hissing sounds, his hands flapping furiously so that one no longer knows whether he is still rejoicing, or he was taken over by some kind of great suffering and grief” (II, 250) – Vasić's narrative evolution is based on two poles: tragic and comic. The distortions of Jaćim Medenica are caricatures because he is also the figuration of the horror whose real participant is Resimić's monstrosity: the freakishness of the war corresponds to the drummer's monstrosity, just as the stylized figuration of the war in the falcon ceremony corresponds to the infuriating pettiness of Jaćim Medenica. Jaćim Medenica within presenting figuration is alienating from his own self as he becomes his own figure: unidentified impersonality governs his behaviour in the parade because he mentally puts himself in his own untrue narratives that – as something unreal – create a caricature figuration. The very death of Jaćim Medenica was not only described as a grotesque figuration of heroic death, but as such it is narratively emphasized: “So, Jaćim keeled over with a shout ‘hold’”, with that same historical Hajduk-Veljko's shout when he was hit by the Turkish bullet at the very trench, intending to say, ‘I perished, hold on’; so Jaćim's last will and testament should be realized and understood in the same way: I am done, hold on!” (II, 251) The narrator's emphasis of the collusion between Jaćim's sunstroke and true heroic death, which is parallel with the meaningful perspective of the overall ending scene in which the woman who treats Jaćim's sunstroke at his bedside parodies the heroic and epic pattern according to which the woman heals the heroic wounds, agree with Jaćim's sub-

sequent ironic relationship towards his own participation in the war and the parade: in contrast to many glorifying modifications of his war experiences he used to talk about before the parade, Jaćim Medenica says that “he eventually earned one wound” (II, 253), which means that after the parade he confessed about untruthfulness of his own story about the war. The parade revealed the semblance of the narrated war, as the awareness of a “real genuine wound” (II, 253) enabled Jaćim to recognize just “contusion” within himself (II, 253). The parade, therefore, is cathartic and enlightening for Jaćim Medenica, who, in ironizing his own actions, consciously emphasizes his *putting himself* into the falcon festivity and its representational and figurative character. Thus, the war becomes the basis for shaping comic effects in the narrative optics of Dragiša Vasić. Hence, the characters whose grotesque potential sketches the stories *Ivan – Ilija Ivić* (II, 268) and *Nuisance* (II, 214) have in the default register certain time marked by the war: whereas Resimić the drummer entered the war as a grotesque character, those other characters, such as Jaćim Medenica, become grotesque after the war, which means that their individual feature is not in the pronounced but in the indirect relationship with the war. When the dominant position of their individual features is in the story, then the war exists as a mere background to their postwar strangeness, but when this strangeness is recognized in the *indirect* connection with the war, it is realized that in these stories the subject of the narrative has only seemingly been changed in relation to Vasić’s war stories, since the basic change that gripped his prose was a change in the narrative perspective that illuminates the identical subject of storytelling: the war. The grotesque characters of his prose are not meaningfully independent but just situated in the semantic interference of their stories, which transforms their potential in the direction of tragic or comic meanings. Vasić’s narrative emphasis is increasingly recognized on comic or social motivations of his characters while simultaneously suppressing the ontological experience articulated by the *modern consciousness* of his storytelling.

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A LOOK AT THE PROSE WORKS OF DANILO NIKOLIĆ

Danilo Nikolić (1926–2016) was a prose writer of a long, quiet, steady presence in Serbian literature of the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, having sprung from the finest national school of realistic storytelling, which he broadened and enriched in a noteworthy manner.

Collections of stories: *Little Messages* (1957), *Return to Metohija* (1973), *List of Errors* (1976), *List of Merits* (1981), *Airing Out Rulers* (1984), *Entering the World* (2000). Novels: *Owners of Former Happiness* (1989), *The Queen of Fun* (1996), *Closing Time in Grgeteg* (1998), *Autumn Silk* (2001), *Great Empty River* (2003), *Melihat from Glog* (2005), *Proofreader* (2009), etc. He also wrote radio dramas and books for children.

Nikolić's prose was created by adjusting the traditionally understood narrative that also rests on the non-textual matrix of oral narration. Most often, he told stories about people at a specific time and in an even more specific space. This is, of course, the second half of the 20th century (in the times of rebuilding the country) in Metohija and Belgrade, with occasional evocations of the more distant historical past. In this space-time, Nikolić situated a special type of nostalgic hero, who, regardless of the degree of his own social (un)realization, lives on the melancholic memory of Metohija, a real as well as imagined Arcadian land of fullness, splendour, youth and abundance.

Although almost never in the forefront of conversations about contemporary Serbian literature, not even at the time when he received the most prestigious prose awards, the NIN Award for the Novel and the Andrić Award for the Short Story, Nikolić's total work, with the novel *The Owners of Former Happiness* as the pinnacle, along with several

anthological stories, stands as a firm, inevitable link in the aforementioned traditional sequence that connects past and present and therefore recommends itself to the future. Danilo Nikolić is, first and foremost, a trustee of the old clearly and firmly crafted story, anecdotally humorous, tragically and melancholically coloured, playful and thoughtfully deep, all at the same time. This is indirectly but precisely referenced by the title of an anthology he once compiled – *The Last Hand-Written Stories*. At the time of Nikolić's entrance into literature, in the middle of the last century, when new writers were almost racing to find new experiment-marked prose forms, he found support in both family and literary ancestors. In the later years, every new book he would write worked towards restoring written oral storytelling to its former glory, never ceasing to amaze with the ability to remain authentic while in constant change. His books, the best of which, such as the novel *The Owners of Former Happiness* or the *Gypsy Knife* stories, belong to the best part of the Serbian prose of the 20th century, feature a range of characters both ordinary and eccentric, best reflecting our time and our region. Here is an overview of his most important works.

The Owners of Former Happiness and The Queen of Fun

With several books of stories and an unusually successful novel, *The Owners of Former Happiness*, Danilo Nikolić has secured his place in that part of contemporary Serbian prose that is based on a renewed realistic tradition. The art of storytelling, the care for language and detail, and the delicate, almost poetic evocation of times past, have always had an unchanging (non-inflationary) price in literature. These are all features of Nikolić's storytelling, thanks to which he, quietly and gradually, with poetic consistency and by persistently telling "his story", eventually emerged as a representative of the "old school". Let us immediately suspect this obviousness: Nikolić is indeed, in the stories, the offspring of a long and praiseworthy tradition of elementary storytelling, but in the novel (perhaps because of the very nature of the genre), he is formally more inventive and prone to questioning the mimetic narrative of the first degree, fortunately – because, in more radical experiments, what happens is the opposite – with suggestive aesthetic effects. *The Owners of Former Happiness*, with its fragmentary composition, constant change of narrative perspective and especially the non-idealizing, but somewhat romanticized approach to the neuralgic theme of Kosovo, stands as the pinnacle of Nikolić's oeuvre.

Nikolić's second novel, *The Queen of Fun* (1995), convinces the reader that the writer has persevered on the path of rethinking and reinventing a realistically based way of storytelling. If *The Owners of*

Former Happiness was written as the author's search for a novelistic form, then *The Queen of Fun* was written from the point of view of the procedure and form already found, with certain corrections of course, as well as necessary innovative solutions. Comparative analysis is, therefore, inevitable and imposed on the language of criticism at the very core of things.

In *The Queen of Fun*, the reader encounters the familiar themes and places of Nikolić's earlier books. The characters are also shaped in a similar or even identical way, usually overpowered by passions, obsessed with an idea or pressed with the burden of memories. The central narrator is discreetly moved away from the main story flow and only occasionally participates in it, mainly as an observer or as a listener, more precisely as an intermediary (or a carrier, a notary) between many other narrators and readers. Three stories are intertwined to form the main story. At first glance, each of them is a story separate from the others. Each is narrated differently (the convention of the found manuscript, the memoir, the writer's journal) and the temporal and spatial setting of each of the stories differs as well. At first, these stories (a) shift rhythmically, in a way that seemingly places them far from one another, but gradually, as the novel progresses, they become closer and closer, so that, at one barely noticeable moment, they begin to mirror each other. The author's voice suggests that everyone's life is the same, regardless of the times and circumstances, and even if it does not seem to be the case, even if some detail is different, everything will turn out to be the same again. *The Queen of Fun*, in this sense, provides an understanding of the world that Danilo Nikolić presented to us in *The Owners of Former Happiness* with even more extreme consequences.

There is very little left of the epic visions of history and politics in Nikolić's novel, more precisely only a shadow of a comprehensive, objectified picture of the world. Even this shadow is reached in a circumventing, fragmentary, non-apodictic way. When he recounts events of the past, such as political parties in the first Yugoslavia or executions carried out immediately after World War II, the writer always does so by reconstructing a seemingly marginal, personal, but typically tragic human destiny. In other words, his characters do not understand what history has to say, nor do they penetrate its demonic whims. In search of themselves, of their own, authentic character (the novel ends with such a scene), which, if they ever had it, is usually misplaced somewhere, in an ancient story or an inadvertent gesture, these characters, eternally hungry and longing, do not really understand, but feel so intensely that they are being thrown around, before death brings them peace at last.

In *The Owners of Former Happiness*, a novel that, beyond dispute, is the older brother of the novel *The Queen of Fun*, Danilo Nikolić portrays his deep anthropological pessimism in a mimetically unbalanced, play-

ful, elaborate form. Some reincarnated structuralist would probably see in Nikolić's book a good example for his thesis about aesthetically productive, modernist discrepancies of merry form and gloomy content. There is a similar mechanism at work in *The Queen of Fun*, except that in this case the writing game is more disciplined, and the text is more navigable, more readable, without repetitions, without loosely connected parts and without excess material. However, the refinement of form produces the mannerism of content. In short, *The Queen of Fun*, made up of narrative medallions, anecdotes, caricatures and witty, auto-ironic passages, lacks the depth of *The Owners of Former Happiness*, but has the readability and expressive harmony, achieved through paradox, of a well-written novel.

Gypsy Knife and other stories

The fragmentation and layering of the poetic underpinnings of recent Serbian prose, and especially the provocation of increasingly frequent, innovative creative solutions, makes current criticism look beyond narrative orientation, which, to a greater or lesser extent, legitimises itself as an immediate follower of the realist tradition. Respecting the principle that stubborn insistence on continuities (as well as extreme insistence on discontinuities) only appears to end in paradox, in a space that, due to its exclusionary quality, becomes aesthetically irrelevant and uninteresting in terms of reception, it must be said that among writers who willfully stay out of epochal poetic dilemmas there are those whose talent for storytelling convinces us that the "old, good story" is still possible and necessary, despite everything. And how, in a way, we still long for it.

Danilo Nikolić has a prominent place among such writers in recent Serbian literature. Reading his books, novels, *The Owners of Former Happiness*, and especially the collection of selected short stories *Return to Metohija*, again reminds us of the futility of proving the eventual superiority of this or that poetic concept. Everything is in the hands of the writer, in the power of his gift. The end of the last century in Serbian literature saw both rigid, absolutely anachronistic traditionalists, but also non-talented postmodernists for whom the then relevance of the term "postmodernism" as well as the elusiveness of meaning and the distinctive charge of the term (axiologically "positively" understood in the new and "negatively" in the old criticism) was a good cover-up for their failure to realize their potential and for all the inconsistency in what they wrote. Fortunately, in addition to brilliant postmodernist storytellers, there were no less good storytellers inspired by tradition, for whom the term "realism", even when used in an ahistorical, stylogenic sense,

represented a kind of ballast and predetermined value assessment, since “realism” today connotes a historically realized conception of literature, poetic one-dimensionality, linearity and predictability of the story, absence of play, authoritarian meaning, and so on (hence, many categories that in the turbulent aesthetics of our age are not valued very highly). The poetic configuration became more complex because of the emergence of (postmodern) authors of the type who do not imitate reality but “imitate realism”, as well as the existence of writers who are consistent in their leaning on tradition as well as on creativity. One of them is Danilo Nikolić, who seeks to build a solid story – based on the non-textual (the ritual) matrix and the conventions of oral literature – enriched with discrete, suggestive, individual solutions. If, in the middle of the century, ideology was spoken of as an externally imposed corrective of literature and literary life (the conflict of “realism” – “modernism”), today it is possible to speak of the dominance of the “ideology of the text”, affecting the systems of meaning, value and poetic expression of contemporary Serbian literature.

When reading Nikolić’s book *Return to Metohija* (seemingly “private” but indicative information is that the author of this essay first heard some of these stories from the writer, orally), “layering” of several poetic characteristics is what draws the attention first. The majority of Nikolić’s narratives are produced in the process of “layering”, while the genesis of his short story reveals the emergence of a tradition of the verified principle of anecdotal story-telling. In his many stories (eg: “Marsenići”, “Gypsy Knife”, “Remembering Blažena Dimitrova”), Nikolić appears to want to reach a temperature point that has something of an “organic power of oral storytelling”, as Eichenbaum says. The reliance on the traditionally established oral model of narration is easily revealed if we pay closer attention to storytelling in the stories and their form; to the focus on “narrating an event” that is interesting and worthy of attention and storytelling; and, finally, to the expressiveness and seductiveness of storytelling (“what happened? what happened next? what happened in the end?”). The story is, in fact, an address to the listener, who is in it, and often specifically named “you”, as the other person present. That person, who stands somewhere between the teller and the reader, and through whom, as through a medium, we learn what is being said, actively participates in forming the wholeness of the illusion of storytelling. In this layer, or rather in the type of storytelling of Danilo Nikolić, we recognize that the writer is interested in the eternal form of narration, unaffected by time, which, even today, recreates the closed-circuit form of oral narration. Several people/characters, following the model of the “literary pub”, gather and start talking to each other and listen to each other’s interesting stories. The teller becomes

the listener, and vice versa, alternating constantly. And when they talk about an event, a situation resembling a “Rashomon” suddenly pops up. Stories, as a rule, come from memories, from accumulated experience which is transformed into a new literary quality through a selection of those memories, their blending and, especially, through getting the point across. This again leads to the culmination of the predominantly traditional foundation of Nikolić’s narrative, in some way even deeper, than a literary-philosophical point of view that sees just that in literature – a transformed, segmented, universalized and, in terms of quality, a new, unusual way of expressing one’s experience.

There is, however, one less visible but significant feature of Danilo Nikolić’s storytelling, which shows that the poetic basis of his prose is far from simple, which one can discern at first glance. It is the effort to organize, shape and express prose in an “unexpected”, slightly experimental composition. (This process, with some traces of occasional affectation, culminates in the brilliant, previously described novel, *The Owners of Former Happiness*.) In order to enhance the effect of defamiliarization (*ostranenie*), in stories such as “Twenty Days”, “The Diary of Nevena Nikač”, “The Last Ride”, “The Last Reprimand”, the author uses the fragmented units montage technique, develops parallel or analogous storytelling streams, enters zones where the usual realistic system of motivation no longer applies, but the opposite of it: dream, madness, drunkenness, involuntary memory. But whichever angle or model of storytelling he chooses, Nikolić almost always remains concise and focused on detail – that magical, absolutely authentic detail by which we recognize and distinguish between the writer and his skill. The book *Return to Metohija* encourages the belief that the mimetic concept can only be permanently relevant when it renounces epic totalitarianism, only when it mediates and hints at that totalitarianism without the pretensions of fully establishing and shaping it (the writer, in the latter case, renounces his own creative being and becomes an ideologue who fakes and uses the language of prose to express some “truth”). Danilo Nikolić, an old-school writer, who chose the position of testimony (not the position of prophecy or superior commentary from which everything, both back and forth, is clear and understandable, the roles are divided, and events played in a known, predictable and only possible way), is consistently, in all the little things, devoted to the writing craft. (Therefore, at times, his storytelling is reminiscent of the relationship we have with old, dying crafts: something rare, somewhat forgotten and patinated, out of sight of the consumerist public, with no seeming perspective but resilient, tough and authentic, and faultless.) On the basis that was once and for all established by Anton Pavlovich Chekhov, the spatially and temporally precisely set stories of Danilo

Nikolić are transmitted by those visible and invisible threads of the everyday, ordinary, in no way exceptional human existence, which, in the author's vision, reveals its fateful, universal value.

In one dimension, story writing is nothing more than revealing characters in as little space as possible. With just a few moves and words, Nikolić's characters become real and believable. The writer sometimes moves these characters from story to story (integrating all his books and his key themes cyclically) while individualizing and characterizing them consistently and with a linguistic eye for detail (which is the precondition for the character to acquire fullness and the event woven around him or her to be worthy of the reader's attention). Speaking the language of his book, Nikolić is, in fact, Marsenić of the eponymous story, who skillfully disguises himself, conjures up scenes and gets into every new character in a new way, first of all by searching for a characteristic word, phrase, for the nuances, the sayings, the flaws, the gestures needed to bring the story's character to life in what is illusion, and to bring the illusion itself to life.

Like any writer for whom mimesis is a key way of transposing experience and reality, Danilo Nikolić tells of a concrete, real world (Kosovo and Metohija) in a poetic way. The world of the story is presented from an impartial, yet somehow complicit perspective, in subdued speech made by little, middle-class people, prisoners of the system, who, living fractured lives at the border of insignificance, work in the institutions of the system, appearing to exist only as a false, poster illustration of an advertised ideological story. Gathered and brought closer by the same circumstances, they are also cursed in a deeper, fateful way, by expulsion from their Metohija (read: Arcadia), living, as the writer himself says, "the remnants of some terrible dream." The writer conjures up their world, which can be believed to be the only one worthy of oblivion, in an unusual balance of all vital intonations (humour, melancholy, tragedy, resignation, satire, sadness, fear, the joy in small things). Even when pathetic and sentimental, which he often is, Nikolić is unaffected. And this set of poetic and semantic characteristics shows that his storytelling originates in the humanistic concept of the literary tradition, and that he returns to that tradition after creative meandering. As for his critics, wherever they look, the conclusion will eventually be the same: the book of Nikolić's best stories *Return to Metohija* was written by the hand of a master.

Closing Time in Grgeteg

The past is better than the present. That old ideological principle of realist literature, which always sees and interprets new times as a sad decadence of its former splendor and glory, was restored but immediately

relativized by Danilo Nikolić in the novel *Closing Time in Grgeteg*. The novel, by the way, is written in the form of intertwining reminiscent stories in which several, ordinary rather than unusual political and artistic biographies from the time of socialism are reconstructed. All the heroes of *Closing Time in Grgeteg* live from memory; they, in a psychological sense, exist only as what they used to be, or, as the title of the first and best of Nikolić's novels says, they are the "the owners of former happiness." Taking a look back, at the path they have taken from adulthood to older years, living in times that made them restless and forever questioning themselves, Nikolić's prose heroes, with a faint smile of nostalgia on their faces, recapitulate their own life stories, remembering rather than living their lives. Seen from such an angle, past times suddenly seem better to them than they really were: this is how the language of novels renews the thought that ugly memories become beautiful over time, provided, of course, that there is no tragedy in them. The realization that these memories are part of one's being is the birthplace of the story. The imaginative corpus of the story recreates in a cathartic, aesthetically productive way all the non-beautiful and beautiful facts of the past, and supplies the heroes with a fulfilling, illusory, but necessary belief that, thank God, they survived it all and that, thank God again, they are still alive and kicking, only sick to the extent needed to tell the story again.

Therefore, when it comes to Danilo Nikolić, the story is always told from the perspective of mastered experience, after a long journey, from knowledge accumulated about himself, about the world, and about himself in that world. However, the intensity of the former fullness of life is restored in the stories in a way that is not idealizing, but unceremoniously critical, melancholic, desperate and resigned. The past, too, is an illusion, a gilding over emptiness and flaws – is what the novelist suggests to us with the overall impression of his story: we discover it as soon as we dive into it, and we only need the illusions of the past to fill an empty and uninteresting life of everyday, in which we are aging irreversibly. Thus, the antithetical value principle ("old is good and new is not"), which classical realistic narration rests on, ceases to be valid, and the universal relativism of the narrative of modern times rises to the surface when the main character almost incidentally says: "Nothing matters anymore, unfortunately." This sentence is the focal point of Nikolić's novel, crystallizing the knowledge that comes after experience, which is the knowledge of ultimate powerlessness, the knowledge of man's defeat, regardless of the circumstances of that life. Such a sentence can only be uttered by someone approaching their end, only by the one who has seen the world.

All the seductiveness of Nikolić's storytelling in the novel *Closing Time in Grgeteg* is based on the writer's ability to present his anthropological pessimism to the reader in a cheerful and apparently incidental manner. Here again enters Anton Pavlovich Chekhov at his own initiative asking to be mentioned as the founder of the "smiling nihilism" narrative school which Nikolić himself graduated in. The narrators of that school never speak directly about the real subject matter of their story, its visible relationships, or even the so-called "big topics" (politics, ideology, history). Their skill is the art of mediation. Storytelling is always nuance, emphasis on detail, the microscopy of mundanity, immersion in what is seen at first glance, a sense of what awaits us, the search for something that has not been given to us, a description of the restlessness with which one comes into the world, noticing man's inability to self-identify. "I'm never where I am. I'm always somewhere else," says the main character of Nikolić's novel at one point. He who does not possess himself, cannot own history, and does not possess history because history possesses him, and directs his faith as she likes it.

And in no time, the moment comes to part with the world. *Closing Time in Grgeteg* thus testifies indirectly to ordinary people and their lives in the times that wanted to be a glorious past and a utopian future, but by no means a harmonious present, only its retouched picture. Such is supposed to be the phantom portrait of Marko Prlić Firanga, how about: not a great, but anyway a typical representative designer of happy reality, painted by the main character of the novel Nenad Banović. He paints Firanga from a photograph but never finishes his work, for two reasons: because of an actual distraction and because of the images that haunt him and simply seek to be painted. The painter Banović, "standing at the window, saw an opportunity, a bony stranger, who again gave me the idea to make a portrait of a human sparrow-hawk, a clothed tremor, a dressed-up fever." And despite the fact that, later, this ghost will receive its concrete, human vision, it remains an indisputable symbolic, deathlike burden of an imagined image, which imposes itself upon artists most persistently when they wish to forget it, to escape from it into profanity and the routine of their daily affairs.

The narrative strategy of the novel *Closing Time in Grgeteg* is fundamentally no different from the strategy used in earlier Nikolić's novels *The Owners of Former Happiness* and *The Queen of Fun*. This process is based on the parallel management and intersection of the stories of different narrators, and these stories converge in a central narrative consciousness that holds all the characters together in a given space and time frame and comments on all their actions. Nikolić's novels are in fact created either by mosaic stacking or accumulation, or juxtaposition of relatively independent, smaller narrative units that,

combined and coloured by a single narrative intonation, give the impression of a more or less complex whole with a salient point, and a compulsory strong, “novelistic” emphasis at the end. Such is the end of *Closing Time in Grgeteg*. A voice that seems to be heard from nowhere, saying that it is not yet closing time, actually announces its certainty, not now, not right now, not at this moment, while the illusion is still going on, but, inexorably, soon. That Danilo Nikolić is first and foremost a storyteller with a natural gift for storytelling is also revealed by observing his tendency to fragment, to collage flashes of wit, paradoxes and anecdotes that support the central narrative flow in a special, minimalistic way. The writer’s narrative competence is irrevocably confirmed by the inclusion of short letters by the characters who appear in the novel once and never again. These letters, in fact, suggest and reconstruct the lifeblood from which Nenad Banović and Dimitrije Injević Diž, the protagonists of the story and its main narrators emerge. In the letters of the supporting characters, it is only through a few sentences or phrases that one can see the true character and the whole life of their senders, precisely because their many manuscripts are perfectly feigned by one inspired, born storyteller, Danilo Nikolić. His story is dynamic because of the well-written parts that feature oral narration, the constant transformation of tonality and rapid shifts of very short narrative sequences.

There is another feature of Nikolić’s novel that reminds us of the tradition of Serbian realist storytelling, namely, the convention originating from this tradition of describing and indirectly constructing a story about a crucial but absent character (such as, for example, the story “The Honourable Old Man” by Stevan Sremac). Danilo Nikolić, using it in an authorial way, revitalizes this convention and returns it to the arsenal of contemporary Serbian prose. If, in *The Owners of Former Happiness*, he split one story into pieces only to eventually return to its beginning, and, in *The Queen of Fun*, collected in a rashomonic way several visions of one and the same story, in *Closing Time in Grgeteg*, Nikolić built the crucial although not the central character of the story, the figure of Marko Prlić Firanga, thanks to which the represented world gets one more psychological and historical dimension. The ceremony that should be the crown of Prlić’s career turns into a sad settling of the heroes’ accounts with himself and with others, with failures, unfulfillment, disappointment and the nostalgia for the loves once had that can no longer be restored. All of a sudden, the main character’s balance sheet of life shows itself as cruel and devastating. The pursuit of love has made relationships among almost all major characters turn into a whirlwind of promiscuity in which everyone has everyone but has no self. And despair is deeper and more difficult because heroes live in a time when social dishonesty is the only possible

behaviour. By accident, Nenad Banović ends up in prison and since then his life has turned into a feverish pursuit of self-fulfillment that cannot be achieved, except in the fleeting moments of more false than actual erotic intimacy. After such moments, the realization that there is no consolation becomes even more defeating.

Although somehow too transparent, and less artistically compelling than previous Nikolić's novels, *Closing Time in Grgeteg* rests on a well-articulated and even better directed energy of storytelling in the recent past and contemporary life, showing that there is no good novel without a good story and that the future of the most popular literary genre is mostly based on interesting and readable storytelling. The final effect of Nikolić's novel is a melancholic recounting of life as experienced by his troubled heroes in adulthood, reminding us of the ancient truth that every human being is always at a loss. Readable, seductive and well-composed, *Closing Time in Grgeteg* does not have the depth and fullness of *The Owners of Former Happiness* and Nikolić's anthological stories, but the light it shines calls for a re-reading and re-examination of one masterful literary oeuvre, not so big in size, however highly unique. Undoubtedly, this oeuvre – showing how a well-received tradition, blended with individual gift and well-measured and interestingly presented theme, produces, as a rule, a readable and meaningful work – has enriched and expanded, although not radically changed, the narrative horizon of recent Serbian literature.

Translated from Serbian by
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SLOBODAN ANTONIĆ

DECHRISTIANIZATION AND SERBIAN SOCIETY

(From the Book: *Dismantling the culture*, Belgrade 2016)

The main concept of this chapter¹ is not *secularization* – as it is used in the usual² (or sociological)³ sense. Secularization is generally defined as “the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols”, “withdrawal of religion from the public sphere into the private one”, “changing the system of values and norms”, or “creating a society of non-religious values and secular institutions” as “a part of social modernization and rationalization.”

I couldn’t help but notice that both the descriptive and the normative elements of this term are wrong. Descriptive, because it shows secularization solely as a “process” – therefore, as something spontaneous, natural, implied and you cannot simply run counter it. However, as I

¹ This is a more enhanced version of the presentation at symposium “Theology in the Public Sphere” [*Teologija u javnoj sferi*], organized by the Eparchy of Zahumlje, Herzegovina and the Littoral, held in Trebinje, from 8th to 10th February 2014; the symposium can be viewed at:

<http://eparhija-zahumskohercegovačka.com/?p=11406#sthash.jtADq84Z.dpuf>;

Otherwise, the dialogue of Christian intellectuals – not only rooted in Christian culture, but also with a clear Christian identity – with theologically prominent bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church for a better understanding of our spiritual and social status, but also for finding a strategy for spiritual and national survival that could sustain us in the upcoming time; I have struggled to think and write primarily as a sociologist in this text, though certainly as a sociologist of Christian cultural orientation.

² <http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secularization>

³ Dragan Todorović, *Sekularizacija i sekularizam* [*Secularization and Secularism*] – key ideas and terminological distinctions, www.npao.ni.ac.rs/files/584/Sekularizam_i_sekularizacija_68975.pdf

will show later, it is about a *project*, an idea and a value matrix of a part of systemic elite (establishment), a project that is being carried out and that is actively being worked on and through which ideological domination in society is secured, by eliminating the freedom to make life choices and value of competition.

Also, using the term *secularization* as a kind of neutral description of what is happening in contemporary societies is undoubtedly normative smuggling of one's own ideology and portraying it as socially desirable and "scientifically objective". Namely, since secularization is paired with *modernization* and *rationalization*, as usual benchmarks of modern societies, it follows from this equation that we cannot have a "qualitative" modern society if it is not sufficiently "secularized". Thus, the notion of secularization, mostly in public, as well as in social sciences,⁴ becomes just another pseudo-scientific ideologue that overshadows simplicity and justifies cultural hegemony of consumerism and materialism.⁵

That is why it seems to me that the term *dechristianization* is better and fairer. Specifically, it describes what is really happening in Western societies: planned separation of citizens from the Christian faith and piety and active work on rise of anti-Christian disbelief. Furthermore, like all terms with the prefix *de-*, this term tells us that it is not only a process, but also a project that launches reality.⁶

It is a kind of unique anti-Christian pressure that comes not only from the state but also from society. Therefore, it is not any extreme political violence, such as at one-time Jacobins and Bolsheviks' terror. It is social (including and cultural) pressure, with elements of aggressive atheist fundamentalism represented by an active anti-Christian movement. Its centre is not in the ordinary people, but in the system's elite, more precisely, in those structures that maintain or create norms.⁷

⁴ One of the few significant exceptions is certainly the book of Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, translated from the English by Slobodan Damnjanović and Slobodan Divjak (Beograd, Službeni glasnik i Albatros plus, 2011; original: Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 2007).

⁵ See Chapter II of this book.

⁶ Nowadays, the term *dechristianization* is exclusively used for the project on Christianity destruction during the French Revolution in politically correct journalism, (for instance, Wikipedia, "Dechristianisation of France during the French Revolution", http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dechristianisation_of_France_during_the_French_Revolution). This is done, of course, because the use of this term and to denote today's opportunities – rather than the term "secularization" that connotes spontaneity – would imply that it was a project and then certain questions are naturally raised such as: who would be the most responsible person for it, who gave the right to carry out the project and should it not be mobilized for defense against that project? And this could already have a potential impact on the implemented system.

⁷ See my books about it: *Loša beskonačnost: prilozi sociologiji srpskog društva* (*Bad Infinity: Contributions to the Sociology of Serbian Society*), Beograd 2012, the

And according to this normative establishment, the process of status reputation of lower social class (middle and lower) towards higher (upper) is managed.⁸

Examples of Dechristianization and anti-Christian Propaganda

Here are some typical examples of dechristianization and anti-Christian propaganda, in order to make it easier to understand about what phenomenon I am talking about.

The first example involves a series of decisions by US jurisdiction through which the normative establishment there literally expelled Christianity from the public domain.⁹ The Supreme Court interpreted The First Amendment (Amendment I) to the United States Constitution, which says that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion” – namely, does not allow the establishment of first-order and second-order religions – so that there is no belief that can take precedence in public, since atheism, witchcraft or Satanism are forms of belief and for them Christian symbols or prayers are offensive and therefore any public manifestation of Christianity is impermissible in the Supreme Court.¹⁰

The consequence was the removal of crosses, Bible, images and other signs of Christianity from all public schools and public places in the United States. Voluntary Religious Education was expelled from public schools in 1948. Prayer at school was banned in 1962. The Supreme Court declared voluntary Holy Scripture readings unconstitutional in 1963. In 1980, the Court annulled the law of Kentucky State requiring schools to post the Ten Commandments on a wall in classrooms. The Supreme Court ordered to remove the painting *Birth of Jesus Christ* from the District Court, County of Allegheny in 1989. In 1992, the Supreme Court forbade any prayer at the high school graduation ceremony. In 2000, students were forbidden to pray even during games in high school. In May 2001, the Supreme Court ordered to

Official Gazette and the Dossier (also available at: <https://fedorabg.bg.ac.rs/fedora/get/o:3996/bdef:Content/download>), especially p. 11-15 and 93-94; *Đavo, istorija, feminizam: sociološke pustolovine* (Devil, History, Feminism: Sociological Adventures). Kragujevac 2012, Centar slobodarskih delatnosti, (also available at:

<https://fedorabg.bg.ac.rs/fedora/get/o:5162/bdef:Content/download>), especially p. 69-77.

⁸ See my book about it: *Kulturni rat u Srbiji* (Cultural War in Serbia). Beograd 2008, Zavod za udžbenike, p. 27-29.

⁹ According to: Patrick J. Buchanan, *The Death of the West*, “Ihtus”, Belgrade 2003, p. 205-6; 208; Robert H. Bork, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline*. New York 1996, Regan Books, pp. 289-290.

¹⁰ Bork, 1996: 289.

remove a granite monument, not higher than two meters, inscribed with the Ten Commandments from the lawn of Elkhart's Municipal Building. The lower courts blindly followed the Supreme Court's orders. In 1996, the Ninth Circuit Court adjudicated that a large cross in a public park in Eugene, Oregon violated the Constitution. The Sixth US Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in *Cleveland Board of Education* that a school board could not open its meetings with prayer in 1999. Then, the Sixth US Circuit Court ordered to remove Ohio's state motto "With God, anything is possible!" in 2000. In Missouri, the Court ordered to remove a fish symbol¹¹ from its seal as it represented Christian sign just because a person presenting himself/herself as a "witch" filed a lawsuit, etc.

When Robert H. Bork (1927–2012), a professor at Yale Law School and a judge for the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit interpreted this judicial dechristianization of the United States, he pointed out that the US courts have in fact become "the most powerful force in creating our culture",¹² usurping the authority of the executive or legislative power of people. Since the judges, according to Bork, come from the "intellectual class" – more precisely, from the upper middle class that constitutes the normative establishment of the system and in turn receives the appropriate rent of a system – it is no wonder that the judicial fraction of the establishment strictly implements the normative program of "radical progressivism" – maximization of the right to all kinds of public "individual expression" and minimization of all kinds of rights to common institutions and common social practices.¹³

Thus, a paradoxical *inversion* of what was once private and public occurred in the US. *Sexuality*, which was primarily a matter of privacy, became a public matter – the right of the individual (including and to have moral support of the environment) to publicly disclose what type of sexual orientation he/she prefers, the right to form a public identity based on his/her sexual orientation, the right to publicly manifest that kind of identity, the right to demand that children in public schools should be informed about that identity, etc. On the contrary, *religion*, which was once a public matter, was pushed into absolute privacy, thrown out of public space, expelled from institutions and schools and even considered inappropriate (from a public morality perspective) for an individual to emphasize his or her religious identity including piety itself.

¹¹ Known as an *ichthus* (Translator's note)

¹² Bork, 1996: 96.

¹³ Bork, 1996: 96-119.

Thanks to globalization and transnational structures (and even normative ones), this practice is spread in the EU. Numerous judgments point to the same direction of value formation of society:

1. Shirley Chaplin, a nurse from Britain, was transferred from the reception desk of her healthcare facility because she was wearing a cross. She appealed to the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights, but she did not win a judgement in her favour.¹⁴
2. A Municipal Devon Council lost its fight to hold prayers at the start of its meetings, after the British High Court found in favour of an atheist.¹⁵
3. A foster couple from Britain, Eunice and Owen Johns, made an appeal to Derby City Council against the brought decision which did not allow them to adopt children, since they, as Christians, viewed homosexuality as a sin. The court ruled that, as journalists reported,¹⁶ “there was no discrimination against them as Christians but that their views on sexual morality could be ‘inimical’ – or harmful – to children. In that situation, they ruled: ‘the equality provisions concerning sexual orientation should take precedence’” (over the right not to be discriminated against on religious grounds).¹⁷
4. British science teacher Robert Haye made an appeal to the Court against the school authorities’ decision to dismiss him and to ban him indefinitely, because he told his students that the way homosexual people lived was disgusting and a sin, according to the Bible. The court rejected the appeal, finding Hay guilty of “unacceptable professional conduct” (though the Court reduced his ban on employment in education to two years). The judge said

¹⁴ BBC: “Cross case nurse Shirley Chaplin plans to appeal ruling”, January 15th, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-devon-21028691>

¹⁵ Daily Mail: “As a judge bans prayers at council meetings, a former Archbishop of Canterbury warns that our faith is under siege”, February 10th, 2012, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2099544/As-judge-bans-prayers-council-meetings-Archbishop-Canterbury-warns-faith-siege.html#ixzz347pB0tbL>

¹⁶ Daily Mail: “Christian beliefs DO lose out to gay rights: Judges’ ruling against devout foster couple”, March 1st, 2011, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1361469/Christian-beliefs-DO-lose-gay-rights-Judges-ruling-devout-foster-couple-lose-case.html#ixzz347sasYRT>

¹⁷ *Ibid.* This case should be compared with the decision of the Edinburgh authorities to tear two children, a boy that was four years old and his one-year-old sister, from a grandma (who was 46 years old then) and a grandpa (who was 59 years old then) who cared for them very well – because they are “too old” and then give children to a gay couple for adoption (*Daily Mail*: “Did the children torn from their grandparents to be adopted by the gay men fall prey to a politically correct social services agenda?”, January 31st, 2009, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1132789/Did-children-torn-grandparents-adopted-gay-men-fall-prey-politically-correct-social-services-agenda.html#ixzz347w3z4hy>)

that school had a policy that made it clear teachers were expected to present positive information on lesbians, gay and bisexual people “to enable students to challenge derogatory stereotypes and prejudice” and everything was part of “modern British values of tolerance”.¹⁸

If, in the latter case, the Christian was fired because he was expressing his religious beliefs in the workplace, then the case of the persecution of the Christian was also interesting because he represented “politically incorrect” views in a church. It was a Swedish pastor, Åke Green, who quoted parts of Holy Scripture (Lev. 18:22-30 and 1 Cor. 6:18) and criticized both gay marriage and the gay lifestyle itself during his sermon in front of about fifty believers. The local representative of the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights (RFSL, Riksförbundet för homosexuellas, bisexuellas och transpersoners rättigheter) heard about this. He reported Green to the police for “hate speech” and then the Attorney General worked on this case. A lawsuit was filed, and the District Court sentenced this 63-year-old priest to one month in prison.¹⁹

Green lodged an appeal with the High Court, invoking elementary religious freedom and the priest’s right to quote Holy Scriptures. However, the prosecutor claimed that the translation of Holy Scriptures used by Green was “incorrect” and that the pastor had to use one translation that was in line with gender, sexual and other equality. The Supreme Court of Sweden finally acquitted Green after numerous troubles in the judicial proceedings. While the judge was passing judgement, the judgment stated, “the question of whether the belief on which he based his statement (Green’s – S.A.) was legitimate or not should not to be taken into account in the assessment”. This meant that the Court did not have to question the “correct” translation of Holy Scripture. The Court also assessed that the real threat to the LGBT community was minimal, which is why Hate Speech Law cannot take precedence over the Freedom of Religion.²⁰

¹⁸ The Guardian, “Homophobic teacher loses appeal against classroom ban High court upholds ban on Christian teacher Robert Haye who told pupils lifestyle of gay people was ‘disgusting and a sin’”, April 12th, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/apr/12/homophobic-teacher-loses-ban-appeal>

¹⁹ The reader can read more about this case, as well as the corresponding sources in: Slobodan Antonić, *Moć i seksualnost: sociologija gej pokreta [Power and Sexuality: Sociology of the Gay Movement]*. Pale. 2014, Sociološko društvo Republike Srpske; also available at:

<https://fedorabg.bg.ac.rs/fedora/get/o:7605/bdef:Content/download>

²⁰ The judgment states: “An overall assessment must be made of the circumstances, including the contents of what was said and the context in which the statements were made, to determine if the restriction (Freedom of Speech – S. A.) is

A similar and more familiar example of the religious persecution of freedom of expression in a church is the case of Metropolitan Amfilohije's liturgical speech in the Temple of Saint Chariton the Confessor, near Herceg Novi on October 11th, 2010. Then, Metropolitan, using biblical rhetoric, called a gay pride parade "the stench of sodomy". In the coming weeks, more LGBT organizations filed more than 30 complaints with Nevena Petrušić, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, accusing Metropolitan of "hate speech". On March 5th, 2011, Petrušić addressed the Metropolitan and asked him to "send a public apology to the participants of the 'Pride Parade' within 30 days, accusing him of using "hate speech", because he "violated the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination". Metropolitan denied this saying that he "did not express hatred towards man, but he condemned sin". Petrušić again gave the same order to the Metropolitan after 30 days, but he did not obey again. However, despite the legal authorisation, Petrušić did not file a lawsuit simply because her service, as she explained "was not able to institute a legal action against him, because they did not have enough people", since "only four people were employed in the commission".²¹

At the end of this section, I would like to represent one interesting case of fervent anti-Christian (in fact, anti-Orthodox) propaganda in our public. It is about PhD Biljana Stojković, who is a permanent associate of "Pešćanik" and works at the Faculty of Biology in Belgrade. In her biography on this site, she primarily portrays herself as "someone who considers religion and mysticism of all kinds the greatest obstacles to the development of intelligence", and "sees a brighter future in secular humanism, (...) the fight against clericalization, xenophobia and nationalism". Her texts are full of assaults on, as she calls them, "people dressed up in cassock" and "hordes of priests" who "wear large crosses" and who, with other worshipers of cults, "have been slaughtering and killing

proportional in relation to the purpose (Hate Speech Law – S. A.) and if the reasons for it are relevant and sufficient." (source in Antonić, 2014: 188).

²¹ For more detailed sources see: Antonić, 2014: *ibid*. One part of Serbian public called this act of Petrušić a dangerous attack on civil liberty: "Reference to responsibility of the bishop for delivering a sermon in a church, where a part of traditional religious teaching is presented and without offending anyone by name, is a direct attack not only on Freedom of Religion, but also on elementary Freedom of Speech." Metropolitan Amfilohije stated certain general value judgments, which we may or may not like. But he has the right to impose these value judgments, not only because they are part of teaching method of his church, but also because freedom of speech implies precisely the freedom to express all general value judgements" (Slobodan Antonić, "Opasan napad na građansku slobodu" (*Dangerous Attack on Civil Liberty*), Nova srpska politička misao, e-Edition, March 7th, 2011, <http://www.nspm.rs/kolumne-slobodana-antonica/opasan-napad-na-gradjansku-slobodu.html>). However, the war-mongering public unanimously rejected this criticism (Teofil Pančić, Svetislav Basara, E-newspaper; see correct sources in Antonić, 2014: *ibid*), encouraging Petrušić to continue prosecuting the Metropolitan.

for centuries” in the murky market of religious intrigues. She claims that “morality and humanism have nothing to do with religion”, and hesychasm²² is “a mystical-religious intrigue”, which “has something to do with the Clero-fascist worldview, since war criminals and extremist bishops are more aware of it (Amfilohije, ‘Orthodoxy’)”. According to Stojković, religious education is “education of dumb Orthodox fanatics”, and even if parents bring their children to civic education, “be sure that teachers of religious education often visit them, show them religious cartoons, brighten Bible topics and take them to nearby churches”. That was the reason why Stojković became very angry and sometimes she even wrote the name of the Serbian Orthodox Church in small letters (thus: “serbian orthodox church”).²³

However, her most eloquent text was “Naučni blagoslov” [*Blessing of Science*] (Pešćanik, June 29th, 2009). “Rumour has it that in scientific community”, Stojković says confidently, “almost two centuries ago, one of the great why beavers from the territory of Vojvodina disappeared was *Orthodoxy*”. Namely, ‘animals coming out of water’, according to some silly interpretation, cannot be food containing fats and be allowed at the time of fasting”. So, according to our biology professor, the evil members of an Orthodox church ate poor, small, good-natured beavers. And no matter how incredible it may seem to us, as modern and emancipated people, aware of the importance of ecological problem, “every logical thought process”, Stojković teaches us, “is deeply unfamiliar and undesirable within the clerical system of thought and vision of the world”. Fortunately, “the beavers reappeared in Vojvodina a couple of years ago”, the professor comforts us at the end of her text “and I hope no one will eat them again”.

Having published a critique of this text – as typical anti-Orthodox hysteria and insulting vilification,²⁴ I received a letter from a reader Jovan Milošević. He sent me a photocopy of a section of the book that was obviously the source of the story Stojanović heard of. It is a natural history description of Vojvodina from 1777,²⁵ where it states: “One would

²² Seeking divine quietness (Translator’s note)

²³ For more detailed sources see: Slobodan Antonić, *Višijevska Srbija (Vichy Serbia)*. Belgrade: Čigoja Štampa, p. 84-90; available at: <https://fedorabg.bg.ac.rs/fedora/get/o:2782/bdef:Content/get>

²⁴ “Kako je SPC pojela vojvodanske dabrove“ (*How did SOC eat the beavers of Vojvodina*), NSPM, e-edition, July 10th, 2009, <http://www.nspm.rs/crkva-i-politika/kako-je-spc-pojela-vojvodjanske-dabrove.html>

²⁵ Friedrich Wilhelm von Taube, *Istorijski i geografski opis Kraljevine Slavonije i Vojvodstva Srema*, (*Historical and geographical description of the Kingdom of Slavonia and Voivodeship of Srem*), both in terms of their natural features and their present structure and new arrangement in church, civil and military matters (*Historische und geographische Beschreibung des Königreiches Slavonien und des Herzogthumes Syrmien: sowol nach ihrer natürlichen Beschaffenheit, als auch nach ihrer*

think that in a sparsely populated country, full of swamps, oxbow lakes and lakes lying at the same latitude as Canada, everything must be teeming with beavers. However, this conclusion is wrong. The beavers are reduced in number because of many hunt for them, as well as constant harassment made by pigs that wallow in swamps,...) Efforts are made to capture these animals alive in a web; not so much because of the skin, but because of the meat, which the Catholic Church (but not Greek) allowed to eat during fast. This is why live beavers are brought to Vienna and sold at a high price".²⁶

So, that was all about SOC²⁷ which ate the beavers from Vojvodina. But, even if it did that, what did the absence of environmental awareness in the 18th century have to do with Christianity? Were the atheists of that time by any chance more "environmentally conscious"? And is this narrative, in fact, about the aristocracy from Vienna and not Christians, about the normative and every other establishment of that time and its power to determine what is socially right or not according to its needs (as it does today)?

But it is clear to everyone that this story of anachronism 250 years ago was drawn up not to criticize parts of the establishment, but to mock and insult Christians *today*, to portray them as primitive savages and lunatics and to identify the racist stereotype of Christians as stupid or neurasthenic bigots in the "elite" part of the public.

The Lost Cultural War

A social state in which Christian practices are rapidly being suppressed out of public places and where negative stereotypes about Christians increasingly dominate made some commentators argue that Christians have either lost the cultural war,²⁸ or are on the best track to lose it. A US research²⁹ found that seventy per cent of pastors at Protestant churches believe religious liberty is on the decline in the United States and fifty-nine per cent of Christians believe they are losing the culture war, while eleven per cent considers that war already lost. "Ten years ago we were talking about who would win the culture

itzigen Verfassung und neuen Einrichtung in kirchlichen, bürgerlichen und militärischen Dingen. I, II, III Bücher, Leipzig, 1777, 1778), Matica srpska, Novi Sad 1998.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 26.

²⁷ Serbian Orthodox Church (Translator's note)

²⁸ Look at the third chapter of this book to find more about the notion cultural war as well as: Slobodan Antonić, *Kulturni rat u Srbiji (Cultural War in Serbia)*, Beograd 2008, Zavod za udžbenike, esp. p. 9-38.

²⁹ LifeWay Research, Southern Baptist Convention; mentioned in: Todd Starnes, "Have Christians lost the culture war?", FoxNews.com, February 20, 2014, <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2014/02/20/have-christians-lost-culture-war/>

war, and now we're talking about how will Christian rights be protected after the culture war", commented one researcher. Half of the respondents estimated that freedom of religion was on the decline, which, according to columnist Todd Starnes, was due to the fact that "hundreds of instances of religious persecution in the United States"³⁰ were documented and "the targets have been exclusively Christians."³¹

One of the indicators of dechristianization success is the decline in piety in most Western societies. For example, it is enough to look at the table about "Irreligion" from *Wikipedia*³² and see that the proportion of irreligious people per country is: Sweden 65.5 per cent, Czech Republic 64.3 per cent, Denmark 61.5, United Kingdom 52 per cent, Estonia 49 per cent, France 48.5 per cent, etc. The United States is in the top half of this table, at 33 per cent, while Serbia, where 5.8 per cent of people are irreligious, is near the bottom.

This table is based on various (often incomparable) research rather than censuses and therefore this information should be taken with a grain of salt. However, data on closed or sold churches in the EU (which still come more from publicity than from science) confirmed the fact that Christians abandoned religion. About ten thousand churches were closed in Britain in the last half of the 21st century, 250 churches were sold in the last twenty years (and are now used mainly as mosques) in the Netherlands and about 400 churches were closed in Germany, but it is estimated that about fifteen thousand churches and neighbourhood facilities³³ will have to be demolished there in the coming years (due to "unprofitability").

The truth is that we can get an impression about some Christian countries which might go through a second baptism – as, for example, signifying what is happening in Russia today.³⁴ According to data from the ROC³⁵ itself, 25,000 churches (three daily) and 800 monasteries (a new monastery every 11 days)³⁶ were built over the last 25 years. Even

³⁰ Starnes has recently published a book of this content: *Godless America: Real Stories from the Front Lines of the Attack on Traditional Values*, Frontline, Florida, 2014.

³¹ Starnes, *ibid.*

³² Wikipedia: "Irreligion", www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irreligion

³³ Dražen Bušić, „Crkve u Europi su prazne, postaju shopping centri, noćni klubovi i džamije!”, *Dnevno*, 6. svibnja 2014 ("Churches in Europe are empty, they are becoming shopping centers, night clubs and mosques", *Daily*, May 6th, 2014) <http://www.dnevno.hr/vjera/iz-zivota-crkve/122038-alarmanтно-crkve-u-europi-su-prazne-postaju-shopping-centri-nocni-klubovi-i-dzamiye.html>

³⁴ Фильм митрополита Илариона (Волоколамского), *Второе крещение Руси* (2013), <http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=qY9vsqdGdK4>; Bojan Đukanović drew my attention to these events in Russia (in our private correspondence), and I would like to thank him most sincerely

³⁵ Russian Orthodox Church (Translator's note)

³⁶ *Ibid.*, an accompanying text for the film

2.5 million Russians bowed down before John the Baptist's hand³⁷ in July 2006 – which is otherwise kept in Cetinje Monastery (and, unfortunately, has not yet become the target of a mass pilgrimage to, let's say, believers from Serbia). Also, thousands of Russians had been waiting for the Adoration of the gifts of the Magi in Moscow, in temperature – 20 °C,³⁸ while one hundred thousand people had been waiting for the Virgin Mary's belt, also in Moscow and also in winter in November with an average waiting time of 24 hours.³⁹ Likewise, the book *Unholy Holies* written by Archimandrite Tikhon Shevkunov became a real best-seller in Russia in 2012⁴⁰ and more than 1.1 million copies were sold.⁴¹

Nevertheless, some newspaper reports (rather maliciously) indicate that churches in Moscow are not visited enough, even during festive liturgies⁴² and three studies (mostly from the beginning of the last decade and led by researchers from the West) find supposedly that 24, 30, and 48 per cent of Russians do not believe in God.⁴³

What about things in Serbia regarding this topic? The last research on religiosity of Serbian citizens was carried out in 2010⁴⁴ and it showed

³⁷ Svetigora, „Blagosloveni put Desnice Svetog Jovana Krstitelja po Svetoj Rusiji“ (*The Blessed Way of the Right Hand of Saint John the Baptist in Holy Russia*), http://www.svetigora.com/audio/by/title/blagosloveni_put_desnice_sv_jovana_krstitelja_po_rusiji

³⁸ Ruska reč, *U redu za darovima mudraca*, 14. januar 2014, (*Russian Word, Waiting in a Queue for the Gifts of the Magi*, January 14th, 2014) www.m.ruskarec.ru/politics/2014/01/14/u_redu_za_darovima_mudraca_27577.html

³⁹ *Borba za veru*, „Čudo u Rusiji“, 28. novembar 2011. (*The Struggle for Faith, "A miracle in Russia"*, November 28th, 2011), <http://borbazaveru.info/content/view/4172/37/>

⁴⁰ *Russia beyond the Headlines*, “Revealing secret lives of saints in Russia's orthodox literature”, July 9th, 2012, http://rbth.com/articles/2012/07/09/revealing_secret_lives_of_saints_in_russias_orthodox_literature_16239.html

⁴¹ Svetigora, „Arhimandrit Tihon: Nesveti a sveti“, 14. oktobar 2013. (Svetigora, “Archimandrite Tikhon: Unholy Holies”, October 14th, 2013),

<http://radiosvetigora.wordpress.com/2013/10/14/архимандрит-тихон-несвети-а-свети/>

⁴² For example, it is claimed that Christmas night liturgy was attended by 220,000 believers in 2013, “served in 348 churches in and around Moscow, which is two percent of the metropolitan population”. (*Vesti* „Moskva: Veliki pravoslavci, a crkve prazne“, 10. 01. 2013. (*The News*, “Moscow: Genuine Orthodox Believers, but Churches Are Empty”, January 10th, 2013) (source: Beta) www.vesti-online.com/Vesti/Svet/283534/Moskva-Veliki-pravoslavci-a-crkve-prazne) However, this is still an increase in the number of believers who attended liturgy for over one hundred percent in just one year, since 90,000 Muscovites (ibid) had come to churches for Christmas the year before.

⁴³ See in detail in: Phil Zuckerman, “Atheism: Contemporary Rates and Patterns”, From the *Cambridge Companion to Atheism* edited by Michael Martin, University of Cambridge Press, 2007, <http://www.pitzer.edu/academics/faculty/zuckerman/Ath-Chap-under-7000.pdf>, p. 9.

⁴⁴ *Religiosity of Serbian Citizens and their Relation to the Process of European Integration* [editor Jelena Jablanov Maksimović], Beograd 2011, Christian Cultural

greater religiosity than previous research done in 1999.⁴⁵ The share of clearly religious people increased from 60 to 78 per cent, while the number of irreligious people decreased from 19 to 14 per cent, as well as the number of those who are religiously uncommitted from 21 to 4 per cent.⁴⁶ According to these studies, baptism of children increased from 84 to 87 per cent, celebration of religious holidays increased from 87 to 92 per cent and the number of church burials was also increased from 86 to 87 per cent.⁴⁷ The number of respondents who regularly attend the liturgy is 9.8 per cent (previously 2.1), 12.8 per cent of them go to church once a week, 27.4 per cent of them pray every day (previously 15.9) and 27.4 per cent of them refrain from eating meat (earlier 16.7).⁴⁸ Furthermore, 63.2 per cent of respondents believe in God, 46.6 per cent of them believe in the Resurrection, 41.6 per cent believe in heaven and hell,⁴⁹ etc.

If we compare the share of those Serbian citizens who believe in God with one respectable survey (2008)⁵⁰ – though the question is not asked in exactly the same way,⁵¹ which is why this comparison should still be taken *cum grano salis*⁵² – we might get a clearer view where Serbia is regarding piety and belief about God. Thus, the proportion of people who believe in God by country is (from lowest to highest): Czech Republic 16.1, France 18.7, Sweden 19.1, Japan 24.0, the Netherlands 24.4, Norway 25.7, United Kingdom 26.9, Slovenia 26.9, Austria 27.4, Denmark 28.2, Australia 28.5, Hungary 30.9, Germany 32.0, New Zealand 34.2, Latvia 38.1, Spain 39.1, Russia 40.8, Switzerland 45.0, Slovakia 51.0, Italy 54.0, Cyprus 55.8, Portugal 58.1, Northern Ireland 59.5, Poland 59.6, **Serbia 63.2**, Ireland 64.1, Israel 66.5, the USA 67.5, Chile 71.8 and Philippines 91.9.

Center, Centre for European Studies in conjunction with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_29722-1522-14-30.pdf?111215110338

⁴⁵ Institute of Sociology and Social Research of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade

⁴⁶ *Religioznost (Religiosity)*, p. 28-29.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁹ The same research, but data are examined according to: *(Post)secular Reversal: Religious, Moral and Socio-Political Values of Students in Serbia*, done by Mirko Blagojević, Jelena Jablanov Maksimović, Tijana Bajović (Belgrade: The Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, Centre for European Studies in conjunction with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2013, p. 39.

⁵⁰ Tom W. Smith, Beliefs about God across Time and Countries, NORC/University of Chicago, April 18th, 2012, Report for ISSP and GESIS, http://www.norc.berkeley.edu/PDFs/Beliefs_about_God_Report.pdf, p. 9.

⁵¹ The question was, “Do you believe in God as a person”, which is more rigorous than asking “Do you believe in God?” Although in Serbian orthography if you write a large initial letter in the word God, it implies that you are talking about personality, while in spoken language, this feature is certainly not visible.

⁵² *Cum grano salis* – with a grain of salt (Translator’s note)

Also, when it comes to the low degree of attendance during liturgy in Serbia, as an indicator of the intensity of religiosity, it should be noted that some of our respectable sociologists warn that “very low response when it comes to regular visits to religious services” is not a certain indicator of lower religiosity, because “the criterion of attendance in church cannot be applied to Orthodox believers. (...) In this sense, the specificity of Orthodox believers in Serbia is to attend festivities in churches and monasteries. We are witnessing that in this segment *the revitalization of religion* in Serbia is the most visible one”.⁵³

If we look at the situation in Serbia from this angle, then we could say that, in spite of everything, dechristianization has not gone so far. However, Serbia is also rapidly integrating into the Atlantic (EU-USA) structures and rapidly becomes part of their normative order. Therefore, the fact that Serbian society is certainly spared from the constant waves of dechristianization cannot last for a long time. In coming times, Serbia will bear the brunt of *great uproot*: spiritual (the decline of Christian spirituality in elite), cultural (the withdrawal or decadence of the Christian character of culture of the whole country), as well as social (the decline and disappearance of Christian social communities).

Explanation and understanding of these processes, including projects, will help us to understand the possibilities of preserving the Christian elements of our society. Firstly, dechristianization and secularization certainly in some way denote both the pride and the arrogance of the elite (more precisely, whole upper class, whose core is the normative establishment of the system), as well as a bit of naivety and frivolousness of a simple man, a man of the people (people from middle and lower classes).

Long ago, it was pretty much obvious to majority of people in society – not just ordinary people, but also the elite – that God exists and acts in the world, protecting us from evil.⁵⁴ There was also a general belief in God’s thought and his final guarantee that, in a terrible world struggle of intelligent forces of evil and good, the good would eventually win.⁵⁵ It should not be doubted at all that one of the main sources of piety was a general sense of vulnerability, not only personal but also collective.⁵⁶ There was a widespread fear of danger, at micro and macro levels, a serious and constant anxiety for existence, for economic survival of the whole family and in frequent troubled times

⁵³ Lidija B. Radulović and Mirko Blagojević, „Tradicionalna verska kultura, narodno i oficijelno pravoslavlje” (“Traditional Religious Culture, Folk and Official Orthodoxy”), *Ķultura*, 141 (2013), p. 23-36; quotes are from p. 26-27; my underlining.

⁵⁴ Taylor, *ibid.* p.36.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 36-7; 42; 51-2.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p.47.

even a fear of all inhabitants and entire nation's bare existence. We were pervaded with the feeling of hanging over the abyss and that only God's hand prevented us from falling into it.⁵⁷ Also, people's faith recognized their destiny and their position in Jesus Christ's suffering and at that time a much more frequent confrontation with death gave rise to a much more frequent thought of His final judgment on us and our life.⁵⁸

God was also present in the collective and spontaneous experience of the entire human community.⁵⁹ That presence was the way the community functioned, the way people were connected to society.⁶⁰ Not only religion regulated society, it actually *constituted* a social being. The individual much stronger and clearer experienced God *through the community*: not only through worship, but also through the life of the entire society and through his relationship to the Creator. This was then based on the belief that God and his holy soldiers and rescuers were ready to hear our prayers, especially if they come from a community of pure and righteous people. People prayed as *a community* – for the protection of their city or village, craft or state and as a community received punishment or rewards for the state of sociability and morality they produced.⁶¹

However, with material progress in Western societies, especially in the second half of the 20th century, two processes began to undermine Christian communities of that time. On the one hand, the absence of hunger, extending the human life span and well-being for the majority of citizens have led to hypertrophy of individual and group self-confidence, which has now become a collective arrogance, infantile egoism and haughtiness. Also, a cultural modesty, an awareness of the fragility and transience of good, as well as a sense of gratitude for the treasure that we (often without our merit) were given to enjoy were suppressed. On the other hand, there was the hypertrophy of atomized individualism and the dominance of morality, which rests on cold calculations and conscious inhumanity (“competitiveness”, a market match, the struggle for survival, etc.), whereby community, as a moral value, is suppressed to the very margin of social hierarchy of values.

The consequence of the first process was *the moral pluralisation* of society and above all the emergence, within an elite and mass culture, of a strong trend of moral relativism and nihilism. The normative

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 93.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 74; 77-8; 92.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 52-3.

⁶⁰ “Not only is this attitude valid: I have moral and spiritual aspirations, so God exists; but the attitude exists: we are connected in society, therefore God exists”; *ibid*, p. 54.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 50-1; 53.

establishment, following its not so broad interests,⁶² began with the normalization of social pathology and the imposition of imperatives on “false sin and shame” – thus successfully removing *the true* sense of sin and shame of a certain part of the population.⁶³ Mass culture has been transformed into a constant call to commit a sin, even into a continuous command to commit a sin, command to commit an offence and no better opportunities have been established in high culture.⁶⁴ The public and especially cultural life of Western societies sometimes even seems to us as a constant collective mockery, humiliation and disgrace not only of traditional values, but of anyone who refuses to obey these new, frightening commandments (“a modern man or woman has nothing to be ashamed of”) and the “artistic life of the elite” gets the appearance of a shameless circle of all kinds of unbelievers and scoffers, playing around those remaining public figures or communities who have continued to hold onto Christian values.⁶⁵

But now the question is raised how can one be a Christian in a world/society where almost all kinds of sins are normalized,⁶⁶ where vice is increasingly becoming a social norm, almost a matter of elementary decency, not just a ticket to the establishment, but also a prerequisite for mere “social acceptance”? For Christians, it is no longer just a traditional question of how to lead the godly life – and how to save oneself – but also how to function in a hostile environment every day: how to, for example, refrain from eating meat in a community where every type of physical debauchery is celebrated and imposed, including and lustful in eating and drinking; how to refrain from working, not only on Sundays, but also during the big holidays, in a world where almost all our superiors demand it from us, or where our clients, our neighbours, and even our friends expect it; how to provide Christian socialization for your children in an environment of anti-Christian education and mass culture; how to fight for the preservation of authentic Christian culture – from the system of values (including morality and tradition) to the elementary right to perform Christian rituals in public?

No matter how pessimistic this view may be, it may indeed be a major question for a Christian in the societies of the West: How can a Christian *minority* live and survive spiritually in a hostile environment?

⁶² See the second chapter of this book.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires (II Peter: 3, 3)*

⁶⁶ For example, professors are required to teach students or pupils about homosexuality as a “normal variant of human sexuality” and to affirm “same-sex marriage” as something equal to the true marriage of a man and a woman, etc. See my book *Moć i seksualnost (Power and Sexuality)*, *ibid.*, p.147-184.

Even in societies that have not quite integrated into the structures of the West (like Serbia), the day when Christians will still be only a nominal majority, but a substantial minority is not so far away. But, isn't salvation also a *mutual action*, not just the action of an individual (because many Protestant denominations⁶⁷ insist on it)? If it was difficult to be saved in an *ethnos* – pagan, godless nation, then the Apostles worked to proclaim it to *Laos*, namely baptized (consecrated) *ethnos*, people of God, the holy people – what to do now when we witness the wrong way of world – historical movement, i.e. the process of repaganization and dechristianization of *laos* in *demos* – thus making people the unbelievers and people who do not go to church?⁶⁸

There were time of increasing disbelief before, but it has never happened to societies that have been Christian for centuries to be included in such widespread disbelief, indifference and apathy that they almost completely lose their character as a *Christian community*. If the conversion of *Laos* into *demos* is, in a fundamental sense, a world-historical novum, then it is also necessary to search for new means of preserving Christian culture and Christian life. It is likely that the pastoral belief is wrong that in Serbia, Russia and other post-communist countries it will be possible to continue rechristianization for a long time by the model: to build as many churches as possible, to include as many children as possible in religion, to restore the original elements of divine service, etc. In the circumstances of world domination of mass culture and the USA-EU value system, i.e. Western normative hegemony, this kind of pastoral solution is certainly insufficient (and probably wrong regarding certain parts).

Also, the Russian model – which involves the conscious, state-led construction of a *Christian (counter) civilization*⁶⁹ as a distinct state, cultural and religious project⁷⁰ – is not applicable to Serbia, for exam-

⁶⁷ Weber points out that the Reformation led to the break with the idea of collective salvation of the soul, namely, the abandonment of the idea of a religious fraternity of life and liturgy (Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* [translated from German by Nika Miličević], Belgrade: "Filip Višnjić", 2013, p. 218 et seq.).

⁶⁸ An analysis of the gospel distinction between *ethnos*, *laos*, and *demos*, with reference to appropriate places in Holy Scriptures, see: Nebojša M. Krstić, *Pobediti ili nestati: ogledi o srpskom putu i antisrpskim bezpućima* (*Win or Disappear: Essays on the Serbian Path and the Anti-Serbian Trackless Region*) Belgrade: Rivel Ko, 2002. [2. amended ed.], p. 38-43.

⁶⁹ See my book: *Na briselskim šinama* (*Along the Brussels' rails*), Belgrade 2013, Čigoja, p. 178-187.

⁷⁰ "Putin: The admission of Christianity determined the fate and civilization choice of Russia", *Фактүү* (*Facts*), July 25th, 2013, <http://www.fakti.rs/rossiya/kremlj/putin-primanje-hriscanstva-odredilo-je-sudbinu-i-civilizacijski-izbor-rusije>; also see western perception of Russia: "Le Pen: Putin is a Patriot, Defends Christian Civilization", *Vesti* (*The News*), May 18th, 2014, <http://www.vesti-online.com/Vesti/Svet/404408/>

ple, which has a poor (small and peripheral) state and a comprador (semi-colonial) power/regime.⁷¹ If it is impossible to change the character of the government in the near future and involve Serbia in the Russian project of *Christian civilization*, it may be necessary to seek less offensive and (literally) more conservative solutions. For instance, it may be salvation to build and strengthen a *Christian sub-society*, a network of institutions that would allow a normal Christian life and elemental Christian socialization. In an increasingly hostile environment, this network could include Christian kindergartens, Christian schools, high schools and universities, Christian hospitals, Christian media, Christian charities, Christian business and consumer collectives, Christian banks...

Of course, this solution has its disadvantages too – one of the main is the danger of self-conceptualization. However, in troubled times, fortifying the position that can be defended may be the best survival strategy, as is probably the most important assumption of any future offensive to regain land that had to be abandoned.

Translated from Serbian by
Jovana Marinković

Le-Pen-Putin-je-patriota-brani-hriscansku-civilizaciju; “Buchanan: it is Russia that is on God’s side, the West is Gomorrah”, *Fond strateške kulture*, April 4th, 2014, <http://www.srb.fondsk.ru/news/2014/04/04/biukenenen-rusiia-ie-na-strani-boga-a-zapad-ie-gomora.html>.

⁷¹ See: Antić, *Loša beskonačnost (Bad infinity)*, *ibid*, p. 75-92.

SLOBODAN RELJIĆ

THE ACT OF BRUSSELS' OVERNIGHT DISMANTLING OF THE MYTH OF KOSOVO

(From the Book: *Media and the Third World War*,
Belgrade 2016)

*The idea of brotherhood lies so deep in European culture that we can find it
in all shades. It is our picture of the world.
Freedom and equality are thoughts which would never have been thought had the
idea of brotherhood not provided fertile soil. But once they are there, they can forget
their origin and take on lives of their own. Europe embraced the holy, threefold motto:
liberty, equality, fraternity. The West chose freedom. The East chose equality.
But freedom without brotherhood is the economic and social law of the jungle.
Without brotherhood freedom becomes divorced from equality.
And in the East: Equality without brotherhood becomes equality without freedom.
The three concepts are inextricably interwoven.
It is strange – yes, more than strange – that the “atheistic” French Revolution chose
a slogan which is a direct paraphrase of Christendom’s concept of the Trinity
(Before the Father we are equal, before the Spirit we are free, and before
the Son we are brothers.)*

Jens Bjørneboe
The Fear of America within Us, 1952

1.

Is there any chance for a Man to oppose the techniques of totalitarian propaganda? “Technique cannot be otherwise than totalitarian... In order to coordinate and exploit synthetically, technique must be brought to bear on the great masses in every area. But the existence of

technique in every area leads to monopoly. This is noted by Jacques Driencourt when he declares that the technique of propaganda is totalitarian by its very nature. It is totalitarian in message, methods, field of action, and means". (Ellul, 2010: 142) What is the limit of the last defense? Freedom! What constitutes the essence of a man, his humanity and what Rousseau has invariably described in *The Social Contract*: "To renounce liberty is to renounce being a man, to surrender the rights of humanity and even its duties. For him who renounces everything no indemnity is possible. Such a renunciation is incompatible with man's nature; to remove all liberty from his will is to remove all morality from his acts." (Rousseau, 1993: 30) And to create the man without conscience, without that intuitive ability to distinguish good from evil. Seeing that, "no technique is possible when men are free. When technique enters the realm of social life, it collides ceaselessly with the human being to the degree that the combination of man and technique is unavoidable, and that technical action necessarily results in a determined result." (Ellul, 2010: 155)

Since the 19th century, Western society has posed a dilemma for the individual "either he decides to safeguard his freedom of choice, chooses to use traditional, personal, moral, or empirical means, thereby entering into competition with a power against which there is no efficacious defense and before which he must suffer defeat; or he decides to accept technical necessity, in which case he will himself be the victor, but only by submitting irreparably to technical slavery. In effect he has no freedom of choice". (Ellul, 2010: 102) This is exactly what is going on in the modern world. In order to limit the power of the West, which threatens to enslave the entire world, it must be defeated by what he has created — a technique, but more sophisticated one. "We are today at the stage of historical evolution...when the challenge to a country, an individual, or a system is solely a technical challenge. Only a technical force can be opposed to a technical force. All else is swept away. Serge Tchakhotine reminds us of this constantly. In the face of the psychological outrages of propaganda, what reply can there be? It is useless to appeal to culture or religion. It is useless to educate the populace. Only propaganda can retort to propaganda, or psychological rape to psychological rape. Hitler formulated this long before Tchakhotine. He writes, in *Mein Kampf*¹: 'unless the enemy learns to combat poison gas with poison gas, this tactic, which is based on an accurate evaluation of human weaknesses, must lead almost mathematically to success'". (Ellul, 2010: 102)

¹ *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle* or *My Fight*) is a 1925 autobiographical manifesto by Nazi Party leader Adolf Hitler. (Translator's note)

Russia Today² and this whole mechanism behind that project is a sign that “the enemy has learned to fight against poisonous gas using the same weapon”. When a campaign was launched in Syria in October 2015, “the first military campaign outside the borders of the former Soviet Union since the USSR collapsed as US officials described it”, New York Times very seriously wrote that “two weeks of air and missile strikes in Syria have given Western intelligence and military officials a deeper appreciation of the transformation that Russia’s military has undergone under President Vladimir V. Putin, showcasing its ability to conduct operations beyond its borders and providing a public demonstration of new weaponry, tactics and strategy. The strikes have involved aircraft never before tested in combat, including the Sukhoi Su-34 strike fighter, which NATO calls the Fullback, and a ship-based cruise missile fired more than 900 miles from the Caspian Sea, which, according to some analysts, surpasses the American equivalent in technological capability and guess what, analysts of New York Times write, unlike the Crimea operation, “the bombings in Syria...are being conducted openly and are being documented with great fanfare by the Ministry of Defense in Moscow, which distributes targeting video in the way the Pentagon did during the Persian Gulf war in 1991”. (Myers, 2015)

The technique of “poisonous gas” has been successfully mastered by Chinese and it has been shown mostly in the “economic war” so far. The decisive behavior of Chinese towards American corporations of new technologies is evident. For a while, China has seemed like a huge market that, like all markets, surrenders to major players. New technology techniques have been developing without any difficulty. In spite of all that, since one of the basic behavioral traits is “the arrogance of power”, they underestimated “yellow race” users of their services. But then, the Chinese state found the way how to answer using “poisonous gas”. And the situation has changed. “Five years ago, Google took a far-reaching decision to withdraw from China protesting against persistent attempt to hack their codes, an attempt to hack into Gmail accounts of dissidents and policy that allows the company to censor the results of its research. During that time, other large companies were considering whether to follow this or not. All in all, they did not join, which was why Xi (President of China, noted S.R.) in Seattle, where he represented a market of six hundred million Internet users, was welcomed like no other president”, New Yorker wrote on the occasion of Chinese President Xi Jinping’s visit to the United States in September 2015 that focused on economic issues, so he “spent more time in Seattle meeting

² RT is a Russian international television network funded by the Russian government. (Translator’s note)

with managers than in Washington, with political figures and journalists.” But Xi acted like someone who did not come to please corporations. On the contrary!

These were images that showed all the “brilliance and misery of large corporations”. First, Xi received the managers at the Waldorf Astoria, which had become Chinese ownership a year earlier. The year before, Chinese insurance corporations, close to official Beijing, paid for that super-luxurious hotel \$ 2 billion. In that entire splendour, Xi offered managers great delicacies and New Yorker spent a quarter of the text for their description. And then, “a lot of the most powerful people in technology – it was an elite crowd that included Apple’s Timothy D. Cook, Amazon’s Jeff Bezos, and IBM’s Virginia Rometty – stood in line at the Reception Hall waiting for the president for twenty minutes, so they could shake hands and take pictures. Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg, whose company was shut out of China because the Communist Party viewed it as unacceptable political propaganda, disguised and spoke Mandarin to the apparent pleasure of the Chinese leader. Dressed and girded in that way, Zuckerberg was in the first row to greet Mr. Xi. The president smiled benignly”. (Osnos, 2015) And then pointed out: “that the Internet can expand in China, but this must happen in line with ‘national realities’ that his government makes a difference to regulatory conditions between the United States and China, which entails accepting censorship and government’s contact with those who use the information”. (Osnos, 2015) The terrifying corporations to which the powerless and despised all around the world bow before did not oppose this announcement of power. On the contrary! Here is another striking picture from New Yorker: “Bill Gates suggested to Xi travelling Microsoft camps where they can hold daily online forums of US and Chinese managers. Like many US companies, ‘Microsoft’ has had its ups and downs in China; its operating system is the most popular in that country (but also most of them are pirated copies); government agencies banned the use of Windows 8, and the company’s offices were broken into last year. But for ‘Microsoft’ as well as others, the call of the world’s largest market has suppressed any misunderstandings for a unified approach to China. In ‘Apple’, Cook expects this country to become the largest market for its products, although state media launch campaigns that criticize and promote local participants”. (Osnos, 2015)

That’s how big ones do it. And what is left to us little ones. Certainly, Zuckerberg would not put a *šajkača*³ on his head or be a court jester to entertain a Serbian president who forgot what the sovereignty of the state was a long time ago just because of the Serbian market. The

³ *Šajkača* is a Serbian boat-shaped peasant cap. (Translator’s note)

resistance of the small, so-called passive resistance is much more considerable. Non-violent methods of disobedience, fully developed by the Mahatma Gandhi movement – noncooperation with bodies that are part of the system of the great propaganda machine, civil resistance (satyagraha⁴) until various forms of sabotage. Consequently, it is about the resistance of nations who seek basic concepts for their attitude in the depth of their collective consciousness.

2.

If we stay in the categorical apparatus of Western political philosophy – we have no choice, because we only understand these codes for now – only conservatism remains outside the liberal-socialist burnt-out ruins. This liberalism's neglected approach to conception and organization of modern society could better consider morality than profit and establish the order of values where, general welfare would be above personal wealth. "As derived from De Maistre's and Burke's writings, the central terms of conservative thought are authority, loyalty, hierarchy, order and system – rather than equality, freedom or humanity." (Gray, 1999: 110)

Each time a new one involves drawing a line below "the old story". Here we are again with Mahatma Gandhi, a nonviolent opponent of liberal Western society, who says that a Western man is led by the "seven deadly sins": 1) wealth without work; 2) pleasure without conscience; 3) knowledge without character; 4) politics without principles and 5) commerce (business) without morality (ethics); 6) science without humanity and 7) religion without sacrifice. It is difficult to find a convincing list of negative things in short that should be changed in a society that is changing. But it is now perfectly clear that "like the other variations of the Enlightenment, liberal theory has run into the impossibility of formulating a rational morality. And if the pretensions of orthodox liberalism have no base, this is also the case with the thesis that in our historical context there are no life-giving alternatives to liberal institutions. According to the post-liberal and pluralistic view that I now advocate, liberal regimes are merely a type of legitimate state and political communities, and liberal practices do not have any particular or universal difficulty. Whether a regime is legitimate depends on its relations with the cultural tradition of its subjects and its contribution to meeting the needs of those entities. It cannot therefore be argued that liberal regimes are always at the top of the scale when evaluating these

⁴ *Satyagraha* is the idea of non-violent resistance (fighting with peace) started by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (also known as "Mahatma" Gandhi). (Translator's note)

criteria.” (Gray, 1999: 6, italics S.R.) And therefore, Gray claims, “in the postmodern era, liberal cultures and liberal states must reject every pretension to the universality of approach and learn to live in harmony with other, illiberal cultures and state communities”. (Gray, 1999: 134)

Although exponents of neoliberalism still see themselves as a separate class, the process is in fact going on according to Gray’s moderate constant. At the end of 2013, Hamburg’s Spiegel devoted the front-page story to the consideration: What is the Kremlin leader’s secret to success? Without any feeling of affection for the personality, Forbes has just placed him at the top of its list of the world’s most powerful people. The world news magazine, which translates important texts into English for Spiegel online, wrote that the Russian president won all duels with the West, starting from Syria, Iran, then the defection of Edward Snowden to Ukraine in 2013; he used a “policy of force and extortion” (this was done by moralism based on keeping secret that these methods were introduced into these fights by the West); and the conclusion that Putin “feeds on the weakness of the West” (Der Spiegel, 16.12.2013, Heft 51/2013).

But what is the secret of that success? These results may also be temporarily variable. However, the key point of supporting Putin’s power as “an arbiter in global politics” is not a weapon and a skillful technique. These are just means used to make the world feel fear. But the confidence that arbitration would not be self-will without any principles – what occurred when the West was a mediator in world relations – was obtained by an idea – a new idea whose essence can be recognized by man on any part of the globe.

Spiegel also boasted that it got an unpublished 44-page report written by the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISS) in Moscow, “the Kremlin’s most powerful think tank”, explaining that Putin’s authority is now “so extensive that he can even influence a vote on Syria in the US Congress”, because Vladimir Vladimirovich has become “the new world leader of the conservatives”, and this is a new offer for fragmented, atomized and totally disoriented communities, because the current “ideological populism of the left wing” – which is, for example, a tactical tool of Barack Obama or François Hollande – is just to continue “dividing society”. According to this mysterious document, which Spiegel quotes with respect, people “yearn for security” in a rapidly changing and chaotic world and simply said, it can again be found in classic family values and the national state.

Spiegel’s worldview belongs to the mainstream though it should be said to the most informed and oriented part. And this story about “conservatism from the (until the day before Red) Kremlin” was no windfall in the West. So, Patrick Buchanan, the first name of American

conservatism and arguably the most famous conservative writer in the world, asked Is Putin One of US? on his website⁵ on December 17th (in Serbia: “Da li je Putin jedan od nas?”, Geopolitika, January 2014) Buchanan’s questions leave little room for a negative response. So: “Is Putin a paleoconservative? In the culture war for mankind’s future, is he one of us?”

People all over the world support Russia’s “defense of traditional values” against the “so-called tolerance” that is “genderless and infertile”, Putin claims and Buchanan adds, “While his stance as a defender of traditional values has drawn the mockery of Western media and cultural elites, Putin is not wrong when he says that he can speak on behalf of majority of mankind.” The validity of this assessment also expresses affection for these ideas by various people from Western high society, from French actor Gerard Depardieu to Larry King, the most famous television host in the late 20th century. Recently, during the Sochi Olympic Games, when a fierce campaign was conducted in the West against Russia’s anti-homosexuality law, in an exclusive interview with CNN, Formula One CEO Bernie Ecclestone, he said that he “completely agrees with Putin”. “He has not said he does not agree [with homosexuality] just that he does not want these things publicized to an audience under the age of 18.” Ecclestone told “I completely agree with those sentiments and if you took a world census you’d find 90% of the world agrees with it as well.” (CNN)

3.

Even in the craziest tabloid interpretations, the “secret connection” of a man who was educated in the most well-known left-wing systems and Buchanan’s Catholic American conservatism, who had served in the Nixon and Reagan administrations during the Cold War, could hardly be imputed. They are bound by an idea – to change a way of life that is becoming increasingly unbearable for most part of humanity. It is the idea that has historical depth. “In his speech, Putin cited Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev whom Solzhenitsyn had hailed for his courage in defying his Bolshevik inquisitors...Which raises this question: Who is writing Putin’s stuff?” asked Buchanan who, despite his above average education, struggles with the stereotypes of the environment. Because Berdyaev’s thought is more than “resistance” to Bolshevism, which is perhaps most impressive to an American. Berdyaev belongs to what fits into the title of his famous book *The Russian Idea*. This work showed that Russia’s encounter with the European people caused

⁵ www.buchanan.org (Translator’s note)

nausea and mutual suspicion, but “the extraordinary, explosive dynamism of the Russian people in its cultured class was revealed only upon its contact with the West after Peter’s reform”. (Berdyayev, 1987:10) These two worlds cannot be merged into One, and yet Dostoyevsky noted the shortcomings of European rationalism and liberal ideology, because “nations live on great feelings and great thought that unite and enlighten them all, they live on unity with the people, finally, when people even inadvertently consider themselves to be the governing people with it, from which the national power is born – that is the meaning of the nation’s existence, not just bourgeois speculation and concern about the value of the Russian ruble. The more spiritually rich the nation is, the more materially rich it will be”. (Dostoyevsky, 1981: 215)

Putin himself later said in the meetings about political issues at the Valdai Discussion Club, with the intonation indicating depth of thought, about the difference between Russia and the West: “The concept of good and evil, higher forces and the divine lie at the foundation of the Russian mindset. The foundation of the western mindset is based on interest, pragmatism”. (Putin, 2015), described American intolerant messianism as a difficulty in conducting dialogue, because accepting “these calls are truly a departure from our common traditional values, based on equality of all people before the Creator”. (Putin, 2015)

From these positions, one can follow today the thought of the first man of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISS), Leonid Petrovich Reshetnikov for whom Spiegel suspects that he encourages conservatism in Russian politics. Reshetnikov’s biography on the website of RISS also shows that he speaks Serbian. This name is most commonly associated with the Eurasian Economic Union project. His ideological position is clear. Criticizing constant reference to “reforms”, the mantra of perilous neoliberalism, Reshetnikov says, “We lack healthy conservatism. Because conservatism is not based on fear of change, but on calculating how it will affect the life of the country, people, economy, which is interconnected, and the positions of our country” (Russia will always be a world power with leaders like Putin [Rusija će sa liderima poput Putina uvek biti svetska sila], www.fakti.org, 02/01/2014)

Reshetnikov’s diagnosis for Russia sounds applicable in Serbian public opinion as well: “an ideological vacuum is present – that’s obvious... At the same time, the ideology of neo-liberalism is not shared by more than 5-6% of the population, mostly youth, primarily in large cities... However, the representatives of this ideology are practically in all media, it is also obvious since everyone knows it. Their efforts are reminiscent of Sisyphian endeavor; they only cause harm to people by causing confusion in their heads. Yes, a vacuum exists, but also, it cannot be artificially filled – no other, alternative ideology has formed...”

The terror of liberal prejudice is a constant state of the “American media”. Recently, a correspondent for the CBS News, Bernard Goldberg has stirred the public up with a book that has raised the issue again (Bernard Goldberg, *Bias*, 2012). As Goldberg says, the media “deliberately identified conservatives as conservatives... but for some crazy reason didn’t identify liberals as liberals.” Conservativeness is seen as anti-progress, excess, threat and liberality as normal thing and as an undeniable social value in the public. Research will show that in New York Times, for example, a negative term for “the right-wing extremist” occurs six times more often than “the left-wing extremist”. When it connects to specific politics (presidential elections for example), then Democratic candidates (which is liberal and left in America) have three times more favorable treatment in the media than Republicans (which is conservative and right in America). Who’s behind this? In fact, the myth of the liberal media “serves as a smokescreen for realities of corporate media” (Solomon, 2013), whose primary task is to fine-tune the status quo.

Leonid Reshetnikov believes that the way out of the world of financial ghosts is – first and foremost – the choice of the meaning of life, the choice of the idea for which you live. And if you live to increase ownership in London, to educate your children in Cambridge, and to have decent sums of money in your US accounts, then what ideology can be born here? “From my point of view, as a believing man, now the Lord has put us all before the election. All of us... are all in a position to choose – choose how you want to live, which path to take. There are examples of choices.” A conservative worldview has its own answers to these challenges.

4.

Conservatives put “faith in society and history ... first, the belief that action should be formed by practical conditions and goals, namely according to that what it does” (Haywood, 2004: 95) This opinion does not idealize human nature and does not flatter the lowest needs that make people “tainted by selfishness, greed and the thirst for power... The maintenance of order therefore requires a strong state, the enforcement of strict laws and stiff penalties” (Haywood, 2004: 95). Conservatives believe that the conflict between rich and poor can be overcome by the principle of *noblesse oblige*⁶, where the richer part commits itself to the “responsibility to guide or protect those less fortunate or less privileged.”

⁶ *Noblesse oblige*: (French) Literally, the ‘obligations of the nobility’ (Translator’s note)

(Haywood, 2004: 97) Although such a projection of “equalizing” social inequalities suffered a number of serious objections, history could give it a chance, since a liberal “invisible hand” destabilized societies to two war-states of worldwide phenomenon, and overcoming “class conflict” declared by Socialists did not justify expectations either in the sphere of liberties or in the development of manufacture.

“Many decisive and important events in this century and especially the strengthening of nationalism and, more recently, of all kinds of fundamentalism, especially after the collapse of the Soviet state, then the intensification of the role of ethnic and religious exclusivity in waging war and forming states – are completely contrary to the expectations of all political philosophies based on the Enlightenment.” (Gray, 1999: 120) It is time, according to John Gray, to revalue the attitude toward the USSR that is leaving the world stage: “The destruction of Soviet Marxism was, ultimately, a failure of the universalist Western ideology, namely one specific idea of the Enlightenment; it was not the end (as Francis Fukuyama used to say, noted S.R.), but going back to history in forms for which there was a little chance to be liberal, as it was a little chance to be Marxist again.” (Gray, 1999:133) In that coordinate system, when conservatism became dominant in the political system – Disraeli in Britain and Bismarck in Germany – it distinguished itself by “pragmatic ‘taming’ an individualistic way of life”. (Gray, 1999: 113) He showed patience for evolutionary change. The same happened among conservative statesmen in the middle of 20th century – De Gaulle and Adenauer, for example. And “time has also shown the foundation of conservative doubts about the ‘mass society’ whose numerous members have succeeded in escaping from the dominance of ancient cultural traditions. The important truth that the maintenance of moral and cultural traditions is a necessary condition for significant and long-lasting progress – established by liberal thinkers such as Tocqueville and Constant, Ortega y Gasset and Hayek – must be recognized as a lasting contribution of the conservative worldview.” (Gray, 1999:114)

And a stabilizer in the conservative projection of society is the “desire to conserve”, which the progressive-minded liberalism despise and whose power is explained by “respect for tradition, established customs and institutions that have endured the “test of time”. According to this understanding, “tradition reflects the accumulated wisdom of the past, and that institutions and customs which have been tested by time, should all be preserved for the benefit of the living and for those still to come. In this way, tradition is believed to have the virtue of promoting stability and security within society as it provides individuals with a sense of social and historical belonging.” (Haywood, 2004:94-95)

The political behavior of Serbian people over the last quarter of a century, since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the escalation of neo-liberal violence, suggests affection for such ideas – because the Serbian conflict with Euro-Atlantic countries that put the world in order is based on the result of persistent attempts to prove the significance of these values. Despite the fact that the Serbian media and the loudest part of the political elite, were persistently, systematically and all the time led towards the position that was opposite to demos' will and popular feelings that everything imposed on them was more similar to everything else than the transition to "democratic society according to the highest standards". All media and journalists were under constant pressure: and were surprised that the "international community" meant only the United States, Western Europe and NATO satellites, who did not believe that the Hague Tribunal was the faultless tribunal that spread reconciliation throughout the region, who have considered Brussels bureaucrats' laws to be inapplicable and inappropriate, which our Assembly enacted as its own; and no doubt about the intentions of the Western banks could even be expressed in a public place; it was a shame to even think about that something "ours" might be good in relation to "theirs" in the public thus prepared to think like that; tons of black ink for printing was spent to appeal for Lidl or Ikea; and the smallest workshop for repacking Bosch products was assumed to belong to the South Stream; in that way we found the "sons of the desert" to irrigate the green country of Serbia, which has more fresh water in one river than all the oases there together; we have been raising Sartid for a whole century to sell it to the US Steel and it cost as much as a transfer of a Red Star football player whose name no one remembers anymore, and then when they left once they completed their mission, we found the same manager and gave him state money to do the same thing that led to the departure of US investors; without resistance and public debate, we handed over two centuries of the University of Belgrade to the Bologna Declaration to decapitate it and when suspicion and hindering of progress began in Europe, our public did not pay attention to it; shortly after the end of bombing, we retired the commander of the unit, which had attacked the "invisible", and not to make NATO angry, but more honor to that act was given by the American pilot who was shot down than by the top of the army where that military unit belonged; "creators", who gave themselves to the merciless destruction of their own people, emerged from the cultural "margins" and the media here celebrated every recognition that "ideologically conscious" juries would give to them, no matter how insignificant this act was in the country where they were rewarded; above that surge, Emir Kusturica, the Trumpet Festival and our athletes could survive

– only towards Novak Đoković, ball teams and lonely brave individuals, but on certain pages (marked as “Sport” and somewhere almost on the bottom of the article) could publicly display a patriotic mood.

The information system, left over from the previous country, has been unscrupulously exhausted to collapse. Except for two or three tabloids and some electronic media, all the media industry, after being exhausted by foreign looting companies and domestic tycoons, almost went bankrupt. All this is a consequence of completely non-selective privatization and giving the business of manufacturing public opinion, on which democratic society depends, into the hands of irresponsible private persons. Because, as if this country had 80 and not eight million inhabitants, all the media was thrown into the ‘free market’. And everything fell into commercialization, entertainment of the lowest quality – grand parades and reality shows and serious-life news was completely “turned yellow”, become simplified, banalized, or turned into ammunition for the most earthbound fights between political and tycoon class. Each serious story about a possible exit from public opinion, which looks more like a public house than an Athenian square, is undesirable and inappropriate. There are fewer and fewer places where serious discussions and communication about social movements that can “change the world” can be held. Televisions are commercialized, newspapers are tabloidized, magazines are specialized for non-political practicalities and skills, radio stations turn entire programs into “wishes and greetings”. Cyberspace is still far from being able to take discussions in that sphere as powerful levers for change and revolution. But there is something.

5.

During the time when we are all offered a choice of, agreeing to “change consciousness” of our people, following an ultimatum brought to Belgrade by four inconsiderate men from the German Bundestag at the end of March 2013, is one of the most tragic behaviors of the Serbian ruling elite since Serbia obtained new statehood. Seeing that, these were not the conditions which the emperor’s emissaries would bring after the unconditional surrender and the decisive defeat on the battlefield. After all, neither Berlin nor the other Western capital decided and acted in that way after the NATO bombing of Serbia in June 1999.

If a traveler from another planet had come down to Serbia in the spring of 2013, he would have not understood why one side gave everything at the very beginning of negotiations with bureaucratic structures in half-established Brussels’ “united Europe”. That *va banque*

game⁷ (all for a swarm of yellow stars!) did not come from the absolute superiority of the “other side”. History will once be able – when all facts, from abyssal social oppressors to the role of personal destinies, stipulations and weaknesses of political elites are spread in front of her – to make this event transparent, but it is hard to imagine that this move had to be made without seeking alternatives. First of all, because the group that came to power was chosen in the elections as a termination of the policy “Europe has no alternative”. And then all was done as “blitzkrieg”. Would it have been possible had Serbia had structured and well-developed public opinion, which would be more than the inlet of the Western propaganda sea? To imply that every fateful decision must be required to “run the gauntlet” of public inquiries that entail more internal dialogues than ambassador’s deliveries of expectations of “friends” that have become as they have systematically destroyed all the infrastructure that was important for life of the whole nation, and when it did not seem fast enough, they underwent “shock therapy” as NATO bombing, which included a dose of “depleted uranium” in addition to launched missiles to destroy the biological tissue of this nation for centuries that are coming and to get this nation into a state of “long-standing illness”. So, the generations of this nation have been put on the cross with the eternal question: Is it more humane to kill a certain number of subjugated people as Genghis Khan or caring about human rights and talking about them while killing and disfiguring the unborn children of one nation at the same time?

When we add “a change of the people’s consciousness” to this, which implies to teach them how to love and respect their killers, then cynicism has no end. Still, history does not have as much understanding of the undisciplined perpetrators as their propaganda promises. There is something more and more powerful than public opinion that hangs over us like clouds that are rapidly changing density; the culture is what is within us as units and above us as a collective of consciousness. Public opinion is fast food that some McDonald’s will already produce when it needs and drink Coca-Cola, so the fast thinkers will quench their thirst and satisfy hunger, but it cannot bring fulfillment and peace to anyone. Everything is so volatile here. Three decades ago, we thought that social property is Goods that we can use to live well, and five years later – the same but raped public opinion gave birth to the fact that – private property is sacred. Please pay attention: putting

⁷ *Va banque* is a gambling term from the card game of Pharo, which was popular in the 18th and 19th century. It means that a player bets equal to the current amount of money in the game’s “bank”. *Vabanque* is generally a risky choice in that the player puts everything at stake, he or she is “all in”, and can lose everything, or gain an equal amount. (Translator’s note)

it bluntly, this considerable violence against nature and humanity must be baptized in the metaphysical sense – the sacred thing. It is an entity beyond good and evil. It is God's thing in a godless society.

Therefore, it is certain that most political analysts would “find”, without any doubt, that healthier public opinion would not change the course of things and Gallup's research on current moods of “representative samples” would be supported as an argument. In a world of short-term projections where there is no past, the future is viewed as an extension of the artificial needs of consumers; this cannot be seen in another way. All reasonable arguments were suspended and suppressed on the fringe of the public debates about real events: they surrendered 15% of territory and explained that “Serbia returned to Kosovo again in that way”; “we had to get rid of the dead myths,” reported local messengers and drummers of the big propaganda machine – despite Njegoš's impressive work; the process of enforcing discipline of the Serbian Church, with which, as Jovan Sterija Popović used to say, the Serbs were “joined in a way that they represented half of our nationality” was also inconsiderate. Explanations that everything works as the colonizers order have been given acting amateurishly and pretending to be honest with a false expression of pain: changes will be painful, but we do not want to lie to the people! As if the people had ever expected the truth from the Comprador.

It cannot be secret what can be expected when you surrender and obey, in an embrace of such “friends”, or: what follows after friendly “partition” of the Serbian state and when “hostile offensives” stop and establish “friendly relations”. The unconditional offer of “changing people's consciousness” falls into the corpus of certain colonial ideas that can only come to the mind of a politician if he does not believe in the democratic potential of a small country stuck “on the road to democracy”, because if it was different, all would be done to increase democratization depending on the people's confidence in democratic values and to develop trust in the missionaries. However, it was passed over this in silence and without any questions.

This, indeed, is not a situation where one, who has been taken to represent the interests of the nation, would be without argument. If those four Bundestag “riders of the Apocalypse” have not heard of Karađorđe, Miloš, the Battle of Bregalnik and if they saw red when they heard about World War I and II, the defender of the Serbian right regarding “national consciousness” – whose change made special detachment under the leadership of PhD Andreas Schockenhoff come to Belgrade – could refer, for example, to Johann Gottfried von Herder, who said for Serbian wise men in verse that they were “a symbol of the collective size and authenticity of the Serbs”. PhD Schockenhoff, who

brought an ultimatum to Belgrade – studied German language and literature in Tübingen and was certainly unable to evade that name. Especially because of the fact that Mr. Schockenhoff was not a fake doctor of philosophy, which was possible and known in the German administration for the last decade. And one of the greatest minds of the New Age, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, declared that the collective consciousness of the Serbian people had done creations “that could be comparable with The Song of Solomon”. Imagine if PhD Schockenhoff had put on a yellow tie and flown to Tel Aviv to announce how he would change the consciousness of descendants of the poet who wrote The Song of Solomon?! Here we would stop to ask common sense questions and being surprised. I am not familiar with the fact that Goethe’s timeless ingenuity was displayed on blandishments. And why would it be? Hadn’t the poor and enslaved Serbs paid him tons of gold coins to do PR for them in Europe?

6.

And what is our path? Our defense against the plague of propaganda is our spiritual habitus. At the individual level, these are “fully cognitive abilities, as knowledge, feelings, something experienced, what makes him intellectual as he is”, namely as Pierre Bourdieu established it in relation to reality and individual: “Practice...is a product formed through the dialectical interplay between a situation and habitus, defined as a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions, and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks.” (The Legacy of Pierre Bourdieu [Nasleđe Pjera Burdijea], 2006: 67) These are not facts for a sense of helplessness in the coordinates of the Serbian Being.

Emir Kusturica established the “Serbian vertical” as “commitment to Kosovo” in Andrićgrad taking four names: the monument to Ivo Andrić is in Nikola Tesla Square and the monument to Petar II Petrović Njegoš is in front of a church dedicated to Saint Emperor Lazar and the Kosovo Martyrs. At the time when the Hague Tribunal has introduced its ruthless violence and Njegoš’s “joint criminal enterprise”, while Serbian public opinion systematically and by all means “gets used to the independence” of Kosovo and Metohija, this order seems subversive – because European civilization is making progress along the way of “the dissolution of the organic unity of a nation’s will, when society is atomized, when,” Berdyaev observes, “the folk beliefs that united the people into one are dying”. The “free world” liberates humanity in Man. And as Castaneda observed between spirituality and warriors and the

“spirituality” of beggars, he chose the latter: “The warrior lowers his head to no one, but at the same time, he doesn’t permit anyone to lower his head to him. The beggar, on the other hand, falls to his knees at the drop of a hat and scrapes the floor for anyone he deems to be higher; but at the same time, he demands that someone lower than him scrape the floor for him”. (Castaneda, 1981:25-26)

The image of the greatest ancestors of our lineage in Andrićgrad and Kosovo environment cannot be accidental. Really, there is no nation without its “historical generations”. This picture, taking Berdyaev’s people as an example, looks like this: “the will of Russian people is the will of the thousand year-old people, who received Christianity from Saint Vladimir, who brought Russia together to the Grand Princes of Moscow, who found a way out of the epoch, broke the window into Europe for Peter the Great, who glorified great saints and ascetics and honored them, creating the great state and culture, great Russian literature. It is not the will of our generation that has been separated from the former generations.” (Berdyaev, 2013) The Serbian vertical section fits into two sentences, as it was said in 1939: “If, as a people, in the era of Nemanjić dynasty, we had both power and splendor and endowments with belief in Christ and freedom and we neither gave up during slavery, nor became despondent in the era after the Battle of Kosovo, again with Christ, we have already shown the amazing depth of the soul through various types of folk art, and using the power of that same soul to achieve liberation through victorious popular uprisings. Kosovo has testified and testifies that we have never fought for trivial and insignificant things as the nation and that we could never be genuinely delighted with the small things and something that is ephemeral.” (Nikolaj, 1988:102)

The nation, modern Serbian state and culture were raised on the “commitment to Kosovo” (Zoran Mišić’s coinage) with the heroes of the Battle of Kosovo and Saint Emperor Lazar. Serbian culture is not as widespread as Russian or French, but the same laws are enacted and it is self-essential as it follows its originality. And it is certainly the culture of European roots. “The commitment to Kosovo was the highest ethical principle that the Greeks gave us and that became our historical experience. But it also strongly emphasized the ancient law of abolition of opposites that had been proclaimed in the world since Heraclitus,” Mišić wrote in the essay “What is the Commitment to Kosovo [Šta je to kosovsko opredeljenje] (Answer to one Question by Marko Ristić)” in *Politika* [Politics] in 1961.

“The kingdom of heaven where Prince Lazar agreed to go, was that supreme point of the spirit, at which, according to Breton, all the contradictions were resolved, where, as Laza Kostić wrote, those dis-

proportionate differences of temperature in the universe disappeared and the dream and reality got married, where Dis saw those eyes beyond all evil, and Rastko Petrović his Great friend. This point was not inscribed in atlases, it was 'made up' as all creation of the human spirit, from poetry to mathematics" (Mišić, 1976: 246). This supreme point of the spirit was not national and distant. On the contrary, anyone in it could touch poiesis in their own way. "A man from Lika went to Kosovo during the war (First Balkan War, 1912) to kiss holy Kosovo and bring home the holy clod of earth of Kosovo land from there. I have also been asked by all my neighbors and acquaintances to bring at least one clod of earth of holy Kosovo land to them." (Nikolaj, 1988: 75)

It was written in Nikola Tesla's biographies (1856-1942) that his mother Đuka, the person who most influenced his worldviews, "a woman who lived in a village, was very clever and had deft fingers, though illiterate, knew the whole *The Mountain Wreath* [Gorski vijenac]". Nikola Tesla knew the greater part of this Serbian Bible by heart, whose life was spent on guard, refusing to sell his soul to the unscrupulous world of business and in the world of "beggars' spirituality" to compete "on an equal footing" with Thomas Edison. Tesla, as Niels Bohr said "could exert so great an influence in the countries which were at that time most developed in the fields of science and industry, and not in the country in which he was born, in which he grew up, and from where his exploring and independent spirit originated." He was devoted to high ideals and Edison to great wealth. There is something that is not for sale at any price, the "commitment to Kosovo". The ideas of a man who died feeding pigeons in front of a modest hotel as time passes are more encouraging and used in everyday life, while Edison's direct current remains in museums and monographs. Even in the "civilization of capitalism", something was constantly added to the pan of scale in honour of Nikola Tesla's "warlike modesty" that he persistently showed. The basic meaning of the "commitment to Kosovo" is to oppose the beggar's logic and that the meaning of existence cannot be reduced to a coin or even a hill of coins. Seeing that, Man exists and "takes his lot, whatever it may be, and accepts it in ultimate humbleness. He accepts in humbleness what he is, not as grounds for regret but as a living challenge". (Castaneda, 1981: 25)

And just as it is impossible to imagine that geometry and algorithms emerge from Euclid's head without being from the ancient cultural and spiritual horizons, so it is impossible to separate Tesla's approach to science from that of identity, which brings into harmony "with admiration and awe" as written by Kant in 1788, "the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me". Mathematics meets the philosophy and moral principles of a society too in a head of one genius, but not

in order to make Man the figure, as Dostoyevsky said. “Good heavens, gentlemen, what sort of free will is left when we come to tabulation and arithmetic, when it will all be a case of twice two make four? Twice two makes four without my will. As if free will meant that”! (Dostoyevsky, 1933:52) It will never be possible in any society that “can be calculated and tabulated—chaos and darkness and curses, so that the mere possibility of calculating it all beforehand would stop it all”. (Dostoyevsky, 1933:52)

However, the fears of great Fyodor were justified. Half a century later, the “cosmos had been completely desacralized” in the world where “the impoverishment was brought by the secularization of religious behavior” originated from dramatic opposition between “sacred” and “profane”. (Eliade, 1989: 701) In the age of warriors with the psychology of a beggar [Castaneda], finally expanded the profane world in “the totality of ourselves”. Previous worlds had established a point of support differently. “Hence there are differences in religious experience explained by differences in economy, culture, and social organization—in short, by history. Nevertheless, between the nomadic hunters and the sedentary cultivators there is a similarity in behavior that seems to us infinitely more important than their differences: both live in a sacralized cosmos, both share in a cosmic sacrality” (Eliade, 1980:704) A man of late capitalism “lives in a desacralized Cosmos” and has an utter contempt for History. As it jeopardizes him, he establishes a hostile attitude towards it. He refers to the former societies as primitive. It sounds like a prejudice against death. Because “a primitive man, very narrow-minded, uneducated, shallow-brained, rather simple, poor mental capacities” lives in primitive societies (Klaić, 1990: 1089), although *primitus* in the world of ancient Romans meant, for the first time, the original basic word, something primary, primordial.

7.

“The destruction of the past, or rather of the social mechanisms that link one’s contemporary experience to that of earlier generations, is one of the most characteristic and eerie phenomena of the late 20th century”, Eric Hobsbawm will write in his influential work “The Short Twentieth Century”. “Most young men and women at the century’s end grow up in a sort of permanent present lacking any organic relation to the public past of the times they live in” (Hobsbaum, 2002: 10). This state of mind gives our powerful contemporaries an ad hoc right to despise myths and people who have the ability to identify themselves, and to excommunicate as lepers. The prosecutor needs just a few words: the myth is not rational. Science has overcome this. It is a funny old story. Who will believe in fairy tales in the 21st Century?!

One of the most complex issues of collective psychology is being so simplified that one tabloid reported – after one business dinner in honor of signing of the Brussels’ Agreement (April 19th, 2013), organized by Baroness Catherine Ashton who served as the European Union’s first High Representative for Foreign Affairs – how “Ivan Mrkić explained to colleagues the myth of Kosovo”. So, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Serbia, a lawyer who spent his entire working life in the diplomatic service, “held a history lesson” to twenty-seven colleagues who had similar knowledge and interest: presented historical facts and myths, and all that to point out how “the climate and mood of Serbian people were also changing that there were more and more people who believed in Serbia’s European future – Kurir heard from a reliable source, adding that the audience was carefully listening to Minister Mrkić and that they understood Serbia’s views, so at no point did anyone bring them to question”. (Kurir, 29.5.2013) The practical mind of Minister usually had little interest in the facts, because if he had stuck to them and hadn’t sustained, to his and our own detriment, the interests of those twenty-seven colleagues from the EU, he would not have had a “seat of honor, sitting opposite to Baroness Catherine Ashton” and wouldn’t have been praised for the acts of his government against “commitment to Kosovo”. “All those who made speech talked about our foreign policy using superlatives,” an expert Mrkić would describe that marvelously embarrassing moment at the same time to a leading Serbian tabloid, and “assessed the steps Serbia has made on the European path so far to be extremely brave and in the interest of the Serbs from Kosovo and a little bit of Serbian future”. (Kurir, 5/29/2013)

And the facts show that, although Western officials and experts like to say that “there is strong evidence that mythicized versions of the past have indeed influenced thinking of many former Yugoslav citizens and induced them to accept their leaders’ call to go to war” nevertheless, as Pål Kolstø from the University of Oslo said at the meeting in Sarajevo in 2003, where mostly exorcists gathered in order to make myth leave the Serbian people – “but this propensity is not...a mark of Balkan culture as such.”(Proceedings, 2003:6) The Norwegian reminded that Mircea Eliade claimed that the symbol, the myth and the image “are of the very substance of the spiritual life. In a jibe towards de-mythologizing theologians and other ‘enlighteners’... should study the survival of the great myths throughout the nineteenth century: one would then see how they were humbled, minimized, condemned to incessant change of form, and yet survived that hibernation. (Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*. Princeton UP, 1991, p.11). Whenever myths are ignored, they do not disappear, but strike back with a vengeance: Modern man is free to despise mythologies

and theologies, but that will not prevent his continuing to feed upon decayed myths and degraded images. The most terrible historical crisis of the modern world – World War II and all that has followed from it—has effectively demonstrated that the extirpation of myths and symbols is illusory.” (Proceedings, 2003:9)

In uncritical favor of reason, the Enlightenment has simplified the view of man liberating him from numerous humanistic dimensions. In the war of extermination, myth is basically a stereotype that arose from the vulgarization of the history of philosophy. The beginning going back about 2500 years was not vulgar, but a response to the “challenge of the times” when, as we imagine it today, the knowledge of society is individualized by the origin of the world, man, our tribe or nation, our city, our religion, our economy and culture – the story is no longer told by an anonymous community, but by a man named: Pythagoras, Diogenes, Plato ... Since then, stories about society have been signed and philosophy has dealt with myth. Heraclitus and Xenophon “explicitly attacked accepted mythic explanations”, but Plato “recruited myth as an important ally in elaborating philosophical points of view”; for Saint Augustine (354-430) and Christian thinkers until the Middle Ages, “allegorical interpretation was an essential instrument of analysis”, and Giovanni Battista Vico (1668-1744) claimed that “mythology was a tool used to preserve history of the people”; in the New Age, the conflict between “sacred/profane” (Eliade) culminated after the rise of the Enlightenment and rationalism, so Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854) would prove that “the history of one nation was determined by its mythology”, and Edward Burnett Taylor (1832-1917) and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) reduced it all to “the product of confusion of the first people” taking the lid off in dreams and frustrations (Riz, 2004: 551).

However, myth is “our story” about an event that took place at that time (in illo tempore) and “is not just a fairy tale” but it “contains a message” (Leach, 1972: 73). The message to new generations is not just ‘hot air’, but carries power – “sacred corresponds to power and as a last resort to reality par excellence”. (Eliade, 1980: 704) And the “collective unconscious”, where Karl Gustav Jung places myths, is “common to all people regardless of age, culture, or similar experiences” and irreplaceable in the “‘individuation’ or maturation process of personality. The function of myth is to ‘discover the paths that lead to psychic maturity, not just suppressed desires or feelings of guilt.’” (Encyclopedia, 1990: 468) These universal archetypes (as Jung calls “thought forms” common to all human beings) always hint at “wholeness” and “perfection.” As a story, “every myth, in a general sense, is an expression of a new birth or creation, whether of things, persons, or relationships

that human action is supposed to imitate.” And the social consequence of the myth is, as Claude Levi Strauss says, “a kind of binary thinking that provides a logical model capable of overcoming human problems and conflicts.” Namely, as Emil Dirkem and Bronislaw Malinowski proved, “a social group precisely renews and reaffirms its unity through myths and rituals.” (Encyclopedia, 1990: 467 – 469)

Only “wise men”, whose purpose of life can be reduced to figures on green banknotes and stored in a wallet, estimate that a great myth of a medieval Serbian state destruction on a land soaked with blood between the rivers Sitnica and Lab, on Vidovdan⁸ in 1389, tarnishes the image of Serbia. All this banality in an obscene way rises above the popular belief about the Battle of Kosovo. This world of inferior political profiteers rejects any significance of these beliefs developed in narratives and verses that were considered to be extraordinary achievements by the greatest European minds.

8.

The myth of Kosovo is a long- lasting achievement of the nation, which somehow had to overcome four centuries of occupation by all its potentials. And when the greatest work of Serbian poetry appeared near the end of the first half of the 19th century (1847), “it was claimed that the word “Kosovo” was quite often mentioned in The Mountain Wreath [Gorski vijenac] in addition to the word “God”. And the only Nobel laureate of the South Slavs described this fact in inimitably suggestive manner in his writings Njegoš as Tragic Hero of Kosovo Thought [Njegoš kao tragični junak kosovske misli]. There is something about Andrić in this text – who, as a young man from Bosnia, realized how dangerous it was to be honest and then constantly tried to “act against himself” in his work – quite unusual expressiveness: “Ljuba Nenadović, although a Serbian himself, was surprised to see considerable power of the Kosovo tradition in Montenegro...Women who suffered a lot of troubles resting beside a load of firewood on the stone edge of the road talked about Kosovo as it was their personal destiny and personal tragedy. “Our justice is buried in Kosovo”, people resignedly said without thinking that they should try to find it going the other way, leaving the one that the Kosovo covenant dictated. The whole destiny of all people was bound and governed by this covenant. As in the most ancient legends, which are always the greatest human reality, each felt the historical curse that turned the ‘splendid fellows’ into ‘farmers’, leaving the ‘disturbing

⁸ Vidovdan, St.Vitus’s Day (28th June in the Gregorian Calendar) (Translator’s note)

thought of Obilić' in their souls, so that they could live between their 'farmer's' heavenly reality and knightly Obilić's thoughts". (italics S.R.)

That is why a man of grandiose poetic talent who has come from that world is just a prototype of a Kosovo fighter. He is the pure embodiment of Kosovo's struggle, defeat and unbreakable hope as a poet, a ruler and a man. He is, as someone said, "Saint Jeremiah of Kosovo",⁹ and at the same time an active, responsible fighter for "removal of the curse" and expressing Obilić's thought", Andrić would notice being amazed by that sublime tragedy from which originated a great work that had Milton's format, with a sense of "lost paradise" at that time, but also a true call of the freedom and the natural right of oppressed to fight for it, because "Along his path who maketh Might his Right / Rise stench of inhuman cruelty. [Duž staze onog ko moć čini svojom pravdom-/ podiže se zadrž na neljudske surovosti.] "The tragic hero of the Kosovo myth" has something to add to the tragic European loss of paradise, his European rules of "manly qualities and heroism": A mind all wild with virulent desire / Becometh well wild hog, but not a man. (divlju pamet a čud otrovanu/ divlji vepar ima, a ne čovjek.) / Whose law lies in the mace, his traces smell of inhumanity. (Kome zakon leži u topuzu,/ tragovi mu smrde nečovještvom).

Quite in line with the highest moral values of Europe during the Enlightenment is Kosovo's little mythical solution that Wolf doth on the Sheep impose his might/ So tyrant lords it over feeble fellow; [Vuk na ovcu svoje pravo ima/ ka tirjanin na slaba čovjeka]; / But foot to place upon the Tyrant's neck, To bring him to the consciousness of Right – This of all human duties is most sacred! [al' tirjanstvu stati nogom za vrat, / dovesti ga k poznaniju prava, /to je ljudska dužnost najsvetija]. And as the doctrine of the Kosovo myth shows, there is always mighty's mind somewhere, ready to sell "faith for dinner" when some "great vizier" pats him/her on the back in some distant Constantinople, but presenting it as a sacrifice for "a better life" and offer his people to erase this "dangerous consciousness". However, "the better life" if it is not the one in a comedy series, get only people whose great men behave with dignity and determination and who, even though they know that the "wolf doth on the sheep impose his might", know what "human duty is most sacred". This has been the case since Saint Sava and Stefan Nemanja and nothing can change either in the 22nd or 23rd century. Those who sign and seek salvation in support of public opinion today are present, but they do not exist tomorrow. Fateful things are above the public lair.

Hardly one of the greatest classical philologists of the 20th century, Cecil Maurice Bowra, an Englishman born in China, could be disoriented,

⁹ Saint Jeremiah is a patron saint of Goraždevac. (Translator's note)

so that the Serbian folk epic uncritically, like some official patriot praised him, “placing him next to Homer’s *Iliad*”. (Mišić, 1976: 243) In European oasis of knowledge and temporal values, the Kosovo myth is valorized in a timely manner. “Herder introduced some Serbian poems into his collection; Goethe began translating them only in the period from 1825 to 1827, in *Kunst und Alterthum* he mentioned Serbian folk songs ten times; Walter Scott also translated them (Skerlić, 1997: 206) and when Jernej Kopitar met Goethe and Jacob Grimm, “with great treasure” in Vuk Karadžić’s collections, it was no longer a passing praise but a reverence for the work of “natural Serbian people” in addition to Grimm’s assertions, “that nothing so significant in his generation has emerged from Omir (Homer, noted S.R.)” and “that the value of Serbian songs is so general that Europe will learn Serbian language through these songs”. (Skerlić, 1997: 206) The French magazine *Le Globe* wrote in 1827 that Serbian language was “one of the most beautiful languages in the world”. Wilhelm Humboldt and Lamartine were interested in these “beautiful flowers of the Danube”. The characteristic of Serbian epic poetry was “grace in strength and delight in death. If any anthology or picture were to be found for these poems, I would compare them with those Eastern Damascus blades which cut head and whose cut shone like a mirror”, the great French poet wrote. Charles Nodier, Prosper Merimee, Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin, Adam Mickiewicz should be added to this list of people who devoted themselves to translating Serbian poetry. And already, “around 1830, Serbian epic poetry had a good record in Europe”. (Skerlić, 1997: 207) The work of the Serbian People’s Corpus far exceeded the Serbian space, attracting the attention of many great minds: “it can be said that our folk songs were translated into foreign languages more than all other works of our literature until 1941”. (Jovanović, 1952)

9.

The testimony of the life of the Kosovo myth would also leave any newcomer to the South Slavs. When Arthur Evans travelled here in the 1970s, he wrote that “the memory of Kosovo, one of the greatest battles of the world, decisive even in its indecisiveness, remained alive up to contemporary times,” as a philosophy of resistance (Dedijer I, 1978: 333). And in one of his texts for the *Manchester Guardian*, Evans described the nature and extent of the Kosovo myth: “Epic poetry about fateful days in Kosovo was read every day to many listeners in village by folk singers whose rhapsodies, accompanied by sad sounds of the gusle instrument were echoing in a large national lament along the banks of the Sava and the Danube river overgrown with willows, through gorges

of Bosnia covered with beech forests, the backwoods of the Balkans, the mountain strongholds of Montenegro, until far, across the Illyrian desert, they found their echo in dark and empty caves and rocks that frowned at the blue waters of the Adriatic sea. The Battle of Kosovo threw the imagination of oppressed people into the shade who realized its significance much later.” (Dedijer I, 1978: 333)

And when young Ivan Meštrović (1883-1962), “one of the greatest sculptors of the twentieth century”, decided to answer “the call of time” at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna and to create something great, something that would “encourage strengthening of national consciousness” as his Secession professors, he had the Kosovo myth on his mind. At that time, worlds were separating, so “the whole intellectual and city elite of all South Slavic nations... in discovering that powerful basis (the Serbian national movement, which became massive, cf. SR), received a strong impetus and found justification in opposing the maintenance of the Habsburg Empire. The contribution of Catholic intellectuals, beyond the defined circle of Serbian Catholics, was so great that they themselves unquestionably accepted the belief that they were ethnic Serbs. Ivo Vojnović in literature, Vlaho Bukovac in painting and Ivan Meštrović in creation of sculptures were perceived as old Dalmatian Serbs in public opinion. At the beginning of April 1910, Serbian Member of Parliament in Vienna informed his government about the political affairs settled by Ivan Meštrović’s exhibition. By then, a little-known artist, who was 27 years old, had received complimentary recognitions for exhibiting sculptures of Serbian historical heroes. The MP reported that ‘Meštrović, who was a good Serb, took motives for his works from our epic poetry and especially from the Kosovo cycle and set himself the task to represent our Kosovo heroes in his sculptural works’. The Habsburg Ministry of Education made a deal with him to buy two sculptures for 40,000 crowns. Afterwards, they apologized and the deal fell through, “because they could not allow glorifying Serbian history in Austria-Hungary”. They offered him one-time financial assistance for further education. This made Meštrović angry, so he told the MP that he would “not exhibit his sculptures in the Habsburg, but in the Serbian pavilion in Rome the following year.” (Ekmečić, 2007: 332-333) Although he lived in Vienna and Paris, fifty works that appeared in the Viennese Secession in 1910 followed the inspiration of the Kosovo myth and were then united in the Vidovdan Temple. The model of artistic fascination with Miloš Obilić, Jugović’s Mother, Kraljević Marko, Srđ Zlopogleđa was awarded on exhibition in Rome in 1911. “It was hovering in front of my face to try to give a synthesis of folk ideals and their development, to express the idea in stone and construction how memories of the greatest moments and most

decisive events in our history are rooted deeply in us,” (italics S.R.), said Meštrović, who grew up in Krajina where the Kosovo myth as the central tradition of folk creativity was extremely alive.

But it was not only in Krajina. The founder of general history at the University of Zagreb, Natko Nodilo (1834-1912), described in the well-known scripture “The Old Faith of Serbs and Croats” [Stara vjera Srba i Hrvata], which consisted of ten papers published in Rad JAZU¹⁰ between 1885 and 1890. Nodilo speaks of “insight into our whole myth... Ours will be what is Serbian and Croatian... However, if the Serbs are first mentioned here, it only depends on our main source, on folk songs and stories that mostly originated from Serbian people”. In Nodilo’s interpretation, which contains honest and courageous view of liberation from occupation that has lasted for centuries and sees the unity of Yugoslavia state as the best port of salvation, “ours will be what is Serbian and Croatian. In this act, Serbs are what Croats are, and Croats are what Serbs are” (Nodilo, 1981: 44). In “our” folk songs, Nodilo would spot two of the most acclaimed heroes... Marko Kraljević and Miloš Obilić. (Nodilo, 1981: 610) And, “Miloš Obilić, or, to say it better, Kobilić, is a completely authentic historical person, so he goes from true history to an epic. While the famous battle on the Kosovo field that took place on June 15th, 1389 opened the door to the Danube basin and the western part of the Balkan peninsula to the Turks, the name of the Serbian breakneck fighter whose hand, in the midst of fighting in the field, stabbed the commander of Turkish army, the mighty Sultan Murad I, was mentioned in Serbian, as well as in the world history”. (Nodilo 1981: 612, italics SR)

In folk poetry, the roles of both Marko and Miloš are heroic but different. The nuances are important. “Marko personified his people in all its virtues, but also its flaws... Marko has a heavy, metal and deaf mace, while Miloš’s sword is ornamental and elegant, a green sword of the Old Voin”. When Marko holds the sword in his hand it is very unpleasant, as it is his mace, merciful Miloš has an aversion to it. ‘Keep your hand off Prince Marko, – leave the sword, for God’s sake’ [K sebi ruke, Kraljeviću Marko, – ostav’ sablju, da je Bog ubije]... But during the battle Miloš will say without any fear: Better for thee and us we die like men, than give our land away as women might! [Bolje poginuti, neg’ sramotno pobjegnuti!]; he will tell that to frightened Marko who wants to run away. In addition to the fact that Miloš has a bigger heart, he is prettier and taller than Marko... So, this made Miloš even more pleasant and charming because his whole being was accompanied by some sadness and longing or we could say he sunk in gloom, la poesie du

¹⁰ The Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (HAZU) (Translator’s note)

couchant¹¹... In a battle on the Kosovo field, since his faith and heroism just sparkled as making flint and steel, he leaned desperately on a broken spear, waiting for the last rush of the Turks, his fiasco... Everything he did in his life sunk into misery. And yet who was happier than Miloš? Tsar Lazar, Serbian lord, – you have no hero such as Miloš, – who would challenge him to a duel, told Serbian gentlemen to Lazar by acclamation (Nodilo, 1981: 612) Although it is easier to register Miloš in history, he is still part of the most sophisticated mythic consciousness, “the supreme point of the spirit,” where “those disproportionate differences of temperature in the universe disappear and the dream and reality get married.”

What is the difference between these two greatest heroes? In the commitment to Kosovo! Heroism and commitment to Kosovo are the key points of this differentiae specifica: “While rough-mannered Marko drinks wine from a full skin bag, he never gets drunken drinking beer. Marko finally loses his reputation and listens to the Turkish master; Miloš surrenders in Kosovo, but his nation is very proud of him. It was more valuable than the material pleasure and Marko’s noisy glory, so his nation wove a wreath of immortality for Miloš’s beautiful head in honour of knightly sacrifice: getting this tragedy over in solitude, the nation separated him from all other dukes of our epic poetry.” (Nodilo, 1981: 612) And Miloš is “a real myth” which is created because, “in the deep whirlpool of people’s soul (where) there is something, which in no way corresponds to the form of ordinary rough life. Extremely poetic, as well as gifted people, such as ours, wanted role models; and since he had gone, they searched for him in heaven, according to the well-known and eternal *sursum of corda*¹².” (Nodilo, 1981: 612)

10.

The use of the power of myth, its descending from the heavens to earth, is a very delicate act. Thus, as a stone in the foundation of a new royal state of 1918, Meštrović’s magnificent Vidovdan Temple was reconstructed before it could be erected. Other pieces and models stayed there and stood as a testimony that Nodilo and Meštrović were too romantic in too troubled time, and the Kosovo myth remained above every king and every regime. It was superior to the one who would use it and the one who would destroy it. The last Great War against the Kosovo myth was fought at the time of the dissolution of the SFR

¹¹ French phrase *la poesie du couchant* means the poetry of the sunset. (Translator’s note)

¹² *Sursum Corda* is simply a Latin phrase for “Lift up your hearts!” “We lift them up to the Lord!” (Translator’s note)

Yugoslavia. In the twentieth century, the bloodiest time in the history of the state, in a century when propaganda became the fresh blood of global thought and God died — the war of extermination was led against myth. In the mantras, “this is the twentieth century” and “people go into space, and you talk about swords and flags,” primitive rationalism adjudicated without the right to make an appeal. The myth’s right to exist has been taken because, by simplified scientific methods, the truth of the stories cannot be proven. It is like in a police investigation.

But powers of police and political violence against the collective consciousness of the people are limited, because “in the very source, the folk song ... the commitment to Kosovo is the last non-appealable answer to the question of the meaning of human existence...To commit oneself to Kosovo means to renounce everything that is deceptive gain and glory, to leave something what is available for the love of the unattainable, to stand up in a way Njegoš describes and to wait for something to happen even if it cannot happen.” (Mišić, 1976: 245) In the early 1960s, Zoran Mišić recalled us to “a recent example”: “When we read In Praise of Prince Lazar [Pohvalu knezu Lazaru] written by Patriarch Danilo III in 1392 or 1393, it seemed to us that we heard the war cries that were echoing along the streets of Belgrade on March 27th: “Better is death in heroic effort than life in shame. Better to meet with death by the sword than to turn our backs on our enemies.” And we are wondering: Isn’t it the same commitment that always makes us fight for the “lost thing”... Aren’t we always coming to the fullest confirmation of our existence in those moments when we are threatened with extinction?” (Mišić, 1976: 245) After all, wasn’t In Praise of Prince Lazar [Pohvala knezu Lazaru] resurrected in NATO bombing in 1999?

This is so normal for an old European people “because our Christian European culture is our highest and most cherished possession — what we, from the bottom of our hearts, have always loved above all else. One may think anything about Christianity, but it cannot be nullified; it is sown in us and has been growing in our unconscious for two thousand years, it has become blood and bones, sight and hearing, facial expressions and body language”, Norwegian writer Jens Bjørneboe would write about this in his essay *The Fear of America within Us* in 1952. How current it sounds today! It is more current than it was six decades ago. It is a paradox that words about the importance of Christianity in European culture come from an anarchist. In Europe that was made irreligious, the normal world trembled with fear of extortion arrows of “political correctness” keeping out of its proto-character’s way. And so strange — even anarchist! — sound the words that should be just clear and simple statements: “Europe is the land of Christendom. European culture is not a Christian culture; it is the Christian culture.

Every fruit which the last 1800 years have borne on European soil was of Christian descent". (Bjørneboe, 2015:12)

And all this despite the fact that some world of black suit jackets, laptops and marketing philosophy has launched into supranational orbits and unconditionally made a vow to the future – chose to live neither on the earth, nor in the sky, living in waiting rooms for the next flight and instead of opting for "commitment to our stories" and God, this world committed itself to the Company, the Temple of Profit. The guardians of this temple bring the ideology of "blaming common people", despise their customs and implement – a change of consciousness as the ultimate goal! And such a thoughtful thinker as Mircea Eliade declared that the consequence of such an approach was known and cited, as an example, the "worst historical crisis of the modern world – World War II and all that has arisen from that period of history". George Orwell also found that since the end of World War I, "progressive" thought, has assumed tacitly that human beings desire nothing beyond ease, security and avoidance of pain. In such a view of life there is no room, for instance, for patriotism and the military virtues", so this approach in Europe in the 1940s brought Hitler who because of his own joyless mind feels it with exceptional strength, knows that human beings don't only want comfort, safety, short working-hours, hygiene, birth-control and, in general, common sense; they also, at least intermittently, want struggle and self-sacrifice, not to mention drums, flags and loyalty-parades. However they may be as economic theories, Fascism and Nazism are psychologically far sounder than any hedonistic conception of life. The same is probably true of Stalin's militarized version of Socialism". (Orwell, 1977:87)

The nation that is superior to its lords who suffer from an inferiority complex receives influences and becomes stronger in that way. However, it never forgets, because when it forgets, it will forget about its existence. It refuses to "change its consciousness" in the Babylonian captivity: Oh, for there our captors requested a song, and our tormentors demanded songs of joy: "Sing us a song of Zion." How can we sing a song of the Lord in a foreign land? If I forget you, Oh, Jerusalem, may my right hand cease to function! May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not exalt Jerusalem as my greatest joy! [Psalms, 137, 3-6] And the Psalms is a book that consists of sacred songs of universal messages. Knowledge that is in the collective consciousness of one nation that knows that nobody can live when the right hand cease to function and that knows, as Andrić says, "that the most ancient legends are always the greatest human reality," is implied. After all, it is included in the Psalms precisely because of this "vast empire".

The nation always stays by itself. Other nations influence it, but to the point when they change it. If it “changes its consciousness” then it also turns into its superconsciousness, which is, in fact, the consciousness of the people, which will be increased by this disfigured mass of individuals to whom the “future” has been more important than their essence. After that, darkness arises for this people. Its name moves to monographs in which his role is interpreted according to the need of the compiler: are they primitive barbarians who have had to spend a lot of energy or exhausted gentlemen seen as objects of pity. In general, we live in an age where the story of the nation turns to contempt for the masses, and the rule of the people (which should be a democracy) is no longer an ideal or a goal, but merely a means of manipulation. “To speak today of the defense of democracy as if we were defining something which we know and had possessed for many decades is self-deception and sham,” Wright Mills wrote half a century ago, who found that the modern state had switched from “governing to manipulating” and that “we should be nearer the mark and should have a far more convincing slogan if we spoke of the need not to defend democracy but to create it”. (Mills, 1964: 517)

11.

No one would argue today without nostalgia about the eighteenth century, when it seemed that the people’s will was becoming an arbitrator, and when people were optimistically retelling what Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) once exclaimed, “public opinion, this queen of the world, is not subject to the power of kings, because they are only the first servants of that public opinion”. (Mills, 1964: 385) Without faith in these values, democracy is the bondage of mind and conscience. And the fact is that now a lonely individual is tired and without idea watching the process of thought formation that is in constant motion and constant drama. The established channels of communication are without any spontaneity. In a mass society, in mass democracy, and “when it comes to mass, 1. far fewer people express opinions than receive them...; 2. the communications that prevail are so organized that it is difficult or impossible for the individual to answer back immediately or with any effect; 3. the realization of opinion in action is controlled by authorities who organize and control the channels of such action; (4) the mass has no autonomy from institutions; on the contrary, agents of authorized institutions penetrate this mass, reducing any autonomy it may have in the formation of opinion by discussion.” (Mills, 1964: 392)

This is called public opinion or the public today. It is a measure of “learnt necessities” of one society at one moment. It is an atom of

his power or powerlessness. But public opinion, as Jacques Ellul says, “always remains on issues that do not correspond to reality” (Ellul, 1965: 101), it is measured by superficial Gallup examination and is not capable of maintaining lasting values. That modernity, as George Orwell says, “shuts you up in an artificial universe in which you have no standards of comparison”, manipulates your thoughts and feelings and “not only forbids you to express — even to think — certain thoughts, but it dictates what you shall think, it creates an ideology for you, and it tries to govern your emotional life”. (Orwell, 1977: 87)

When Yugoslavia began to disintegrate, the Serbs faced exactly with that. Politically correct handbooks emerged from the depths of propaganda machinery to explain how the “Kosovo myth is a stone tied around Serbia’s neck”: Noel Malcolm, whose previews of the Battle of Kosovo were held at the head of Bill Clinton, Tim Judah, Robert D. Kaplan, Dunja Melcic’s bed... All these works are based on a simple Enlightenment stereotype: “the myth” is opposed to “correct history”. Riotous Malcolm’s mind goes a step further, and in the foreword of *Kosovo: A Short History*, he states that his book is not anti-Serbian, but anti-mythical, and that working on the “case of Kosovo” is a warning to all myth-lovers in the world. Of course, such (least formulated) “conventional rationalism” is practical, but still impermissible, simplification of reality. Above all, it is arrogant to nullify the age-old fact of “short histories”, because myths are “in some ways more realistic than historical reality itself,” Jung will state (he is considered to be superior intellect than Malcolm) in his writing *Civilization in Transition* (C.G. Jung, *The meaning of psychology for modern man, in Civilization in Transition*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964, str. 148-49). Well, when we look at human history, we can only see what is going on the surface... “Wars, dynasties, civil disorder, conquests and religions are merely superficial symptoms of an enduring transcendental attitude unknown even to the individual himself, which no historian has been able to adopt; perhaps only the founders of religions offer more information in this regard”. (Proceedings, 2003: 10)

In the arrogance of propaganda power, science, with all its limitations, places itself in the divinized position of a supervisor who views the other products of the human spirit as faults of rational perfection. Man is a reasonable being, but reason does not cover all his humanity. And “members of a community may be aware that the myth they accept is not strictly accurate, but because the myth is not history, this does not matter.” George Schöpfli, a well-known connoisseur of the European East, claims that exactly these communities with a more developed network of myths that overcome unpredictable changes and adversities more easily, since it “allows the community to cope with much greater

stress and turmoil (political, economic, social), etc.), than those of communities with a relatively poor network of myths". (Proceedings, 2003: 12) But the pressure of the "international community" on them is much greater and systematic.

12.

When we draw a line, we stand before the initials of the Brussels Agreement, "formally 'The First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations (made between the Republic of Serbia and the self-proclaimed Republic of Kosovo), concluded on April 19th, 2013 in two identical texts: one was signed by initials of Catherine Ashton and Ivica Dačić and the other was signed by Catherine Ashton and Hashim Thaçi. Although it was made in an unusual form, this agreement is an international treaty between the European Union and the Republic of Serbia, although a party that legally does not exist – the unilaterally proclaimed Republic of Kosovo on the territory of the Serbian Province of Kosovo and Metohija – participated in its conclusion. Notwithstanding the fact that this Agreement was approved by the Government on April 22nd, 2013 and when the National Assembly accepted the government's report on April 26th, 2013, it did not become a perfect legal act. Since it changed the state border, this act could only be confirmed in the procedure envisaged for the amendment of the Constitution (Article 8, paragraph 2), and there was no such procedure. That is why the Brussels Agreement does not have the power as a source of rights, so it is a political act." [Danas [Today], April 20th, 2014]

One month after "signing", "accepting" and "approving" (May 28th, 2013), the Union Foreign Minister "made a sacrifice" during a session attended by twenty-seven EU foreign ministers and "their colleagues from Turkey, Iceland, Macedonia, Montenegro and Croatia, candidate countries for membership in the European family" "in the same place" and where, as already described in this chapter, the Serbian Foreign Minister "explained the Kosovo myth to his colleagues". In that place, among these people, the need for an explanation could only be "anti-mythical" as Noel Malcolm described, because if that world that spent more time on airplanes and at airports than with the family, ever held a white paper book about Kosovo, then it could have been just "instant history". Serbia's political public opinion is ready for "painful cuts" and virtual "carrots". It is an "arrogance of power" that presumes clerical carelessness for six centuries old oak and sees its destruction as an act of modernization. Brussels' prosaic offices in that world are more beautiful and monumental than the Patriarchate of Peć, Visoki Dečani and Church of Bogorodica Ljeviška. We give all monastic fraternities

and sororities and Simonida's¹³ youthful naivety for just one courtesy smile on Cathy Ashton's spiritualized face – a change of consciousness in the modernization campaign.

Serbian public opinion is silent. Is it getting used to it? Since public opinions today are fried and seasoned like scrambled eggs, this may not even be a sign. Public opinion can “forget” about centuries in a second. But can nations do the same? And this is an even more complicated issue that those who signed the “historic” agreement do not care about.

Still, the specific difficulty of public attitudes is low. While they have the same interests as Brussels being on the same “branch”, from side view, they can be seen as fallen yellow leaves swept by wind quite often. No matter how the public despises the myth that much, the myth does not notice its existence. It is like a flight of mosquitoes into candle flames. And what about the fate of those who ‘put their initials and signed’ the paper about the long history of a serious nation? Most often, the initials are swept by the same wind. And few, as the Kosovo myth shows, are given the role: to be either knights or lords to whom the nation curse souls. But the individual knows nothing about what will happen. Nobody can have an impact on the process of going through the people's sieve. And what about history? History is not strong like the myth. The great hero turns into a murderer in the next writing of history, and the villain knows how to turn into a good guy and a friend using the same deed.

Here is a short, forgotten story about that miracle. The British historian R.G.D. Laffan “to meet the needs of the moment” (Proceedings, 2003: 21), based on a series of lectures for British officers and soldiers on the Balkan front in the First World War, wrote the book *The Serbs: the Guardians of the Gate*, and against the negative British stereotypes about that Balkan people. One Norwegian tells the story that: “For British soldiers in World War I it was far from obvious that the Serbs would be their most obvious allies in the Balkans since the 1830s, when Russia appeared as a major player in Balkan politics, Great Britain had pursued a rather consistent policy of propping up Serbia's main enemy, the Ottoman empire. The main reason for this was that strong South Slav national states in the Balkan were expected to become natural allies of England's rival, Russia. Hence, in British public discourse the Turks had been presented as noble and civilized aristocrats, while their Orthodox, Slav subjects, had been depicted as uncouth ruffians. During World War I, however, Britain suddenly found herself

¹³ Simonida was king Milutin's wife. She was very young and represented a symbol of beauty, purity and naivety. (Translator's note)

in alliance with the Serbs—and Russia—against the Turks, and a different story had to be hastily constructed. In his lectures, Laffan combined the Wall metaphor with David-and-Goliath imagery. The little country [Serbia] stands in a position of world significance: Serbia holds a gateway between the mountain walls, and therefore she is in a position of utmost danger... The more powerful neighbors have coveted the passageway which she commands. In Laffan's rendering, Serbia was a defender of both Christendom and Civilized Europe. The Serbs had always done their best to render [services] to Christendom: for their country is, indeed, one of the gateways of civilized Europe.⁷

However, Britain and Serbia were at war not only with the Ottomans, but also, and much more importantly, with Germany and Austria in World War I. Laffan's argument logically lead to the conclusion that while Serbia belonged to civilized Europe the latter countries did not. This, in fact is a conclusion Laffan is willing to draw. The Serbs, he insisted, 'have never ceased to struggle against the barbarism of Turkestan and Berlin'. No more fuss about *das Land der Dichter und Denker*. But since Berlin is located to the north, not to the east or the south of Serbia, it was not entirely clear how the Gate metaphor could still apply." (Pål Kolstø in *Proceedings*, 2003: 21, italics, S.R.). It would not be clear if politics and propaganda stuck to logic as they did in the case of the myth. However, everything is clear to everyone. The people of the "Kosovo myth" said long ago: the faith is not tremendous in a strong person! And in that way it despised all propaganda campaigns. This does not mean that it is not subject to propaganda influences, but it does mean that it is armed with the ability, the potential for (anti) propaganda literacy. It must not be allowed to end up in a Western propaganda pot like a 'boiling frog'.¹⁴ This is one of the greatest values that can be provided for the nation. The basis of that power is something that is most authentic in the culture of one nation, something that is not visible at first sight and which is not susceptible to interference with external, current, banal; it does not need campaigns and there is no leader who sets himself the task of "changing consciousness" on behalf of political purposes that would keep him in power for a while under external threats. It is something that cannot be betrayed or handed over to the mighty people. It can only disappear if that nation disappears.

¹⁴ There is a fascinating 19th century science experiment. As the story goes, researchers found that when they put a frog in a pan of boiling water, the frog just quickly jumped out. On the other hand, when they put a frog in cold water and put the water to boil over time, the frog just boiled to death. The hypothesis is that the change in temperature is so gradual; the frog does not realize it's boiling to death. The story is often used as a metaphor for the inability or unwillingness of people to react to or be aware of sinister threats that arise gradually rather than suddenly. (Translator's note)

A Short History of Spin – Deadly Virus in the Bloodstream of Liberal Societies

*Journalism is printing what someone else does not want printed;
everything else is public relations.*

George Orwell

1.

It is widely believed that the term “spin” came from George Orwell. These activities were mentioned in his *Oceania* (1984) and on farm (*Animal Farm*). And in the preface to the book of Orwell’s political texts, half a century later, Timothy Garton Ash wrote that “the extreme, totalitarian version that he satirized as Newspeak is less often encountered these days, except in countries such as Burma and North Korea” but “the obsession of democratically elected governments, especially in Britain and America, with media management and ‘spin’ is today one of the main obstacles to understanding what is being done in our name. Read Orwell and you will know that something nasty must be hidden behind the euphemistic, Latinate phrase used by NATO spokespeople during the Kosovo war: “collateral damage.” (It means innocent civilians killed.)”(Orwell, 2001: xviii)

What is the fate of great thoughts? Even when referring to Orwell’s discovery of “spin” (to spin – turn around, revolve), kind Ash “spins” – “interprets information or events in a positive way for him” (Reljić, 2011: 144). So, if the so-called Kosovo war was not spinned, it would be the unlawful aggression of the NATO pact by bombing the sovereign state of the FRY and that did not prevent the righteous admirer of “clear language” (Orwell’s text *Politics and the English language* for healing and reading) from staying on the same political, legal and humanistic positions at all as the NATO spokesman that is subject matter to his irony. Otherwise, when you see “with your own eyes” (not with Ash’s!) Orwell’s text, you see that the great writer found “spinning” precisely as a way to avoid seeing the world realistically. Therefore, he advocated that language should not be used as a tool in the industry of lies, so it should be prevented from becoming dirty, while citizens should be saved from the brutal manipulation. “In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible,” Orwell wrote in 1946. “Things like the continuance of British rule in India, the Russian purges and deportations, the dropping of the atom bombs on Japan, can indeed be defended, but only by arguments

which are too brutal for most people to face, and which do not square with the professed aims of the political parties. Thus, political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness.” (Orwell, 1946) “Political language — and with variations this is true of all political parties, from Conservatives to Anarchists — is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable... It is almost universally felt that when we call a country democratic we are praising it: consequently the defenders of every kind of regime claim that it is a democracy, and fear that they might have to stop using that word if it were tied down to any one meaning. Words of this kind are often used in a consciously dishonest way. That is, the person who uses them has his own private definition, but allows his hearer to think he means something quite different... A mass of Latin words falls upon the facts like soft snow, blurring the outline and covering up all the details. The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one’s real and one’s declared aims, one turns as it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish spurting out ink. In our age there is no such thing as ‘keeping out of politics’. All issues are political issues, and politics itself is a mass of lies, evasions, folly, hatred, and schizophrenia. When the general atmosphere is bad, language must suffer.” (Orwell, 1946)

When language becomes a bare instrument of lies, then searching for the Truth, which is in human nature, becomes completely meaningless. When an individual is thrown out of this state then democracy, as a mode of government established on the freedom of choice, sinks into a state of anti-system. So, spin is a deadly virus in the bloodstream of Western liberal values.

2.

Spin is not an incidental lie that emerges in the complex information system of a democratic society as an immoral act. Spin does not go into the systematic production of untruths, which is denoted in the European cultural space by the term *disinformation* (Volkoff, 2001), and defines “as deliberately calculated putting into circulation false news that should mislead and deceive” (*Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary* 1972) or “the use of information techniques, in particular informing broad masses in order to deceive, conceal or distort facts.” (French dictionary *Le Grand Robert*)

French political writer Vladimir Volkoff, whose famous work *Petite histoire de la disinformation* (1998), translated in Serbia as *Disinformation*, persistently examines the fact that “information is perishable goods”, and states that “we have to be aware that for anyone who

is able to manipulate public opinion, there is a temptation to turn the half-truth into a shameless lie.” (Volkoff, 2001: 19) And this temptation is transformed into a desirable act in a society whose moral becomes increasingly diluted, which is explained without ethical dilemmas. “I remember lunch, in 1982, if I’m not mistaken, during which the late Professor Pierre Debray-Ritzen, Jean Ferré, and I worked out the following definition word by word: ‘Technique that allows one to be supplied with general false information, thereby leading to collective actions or the dissemination of opinions and conclusions that misinformers want’.” (Volkoff, 2001: 21) And Volkoff, who found that the term disinformation itself came from the Soviet Union after World War II, and what “signified a practice that was used solely by the capitalists to oppress and hold broad masses or general public under their thumb” (Volkoff, 2001: 20), he concluded that disinformation techniques “have become a true philosophy in the meantime”.

Then spin, as a product of the liberal Anglo-Saxon culture of communication, is the legitimate child of another (already mentioned in the first chapter) philosophical trend. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, philosophical trends gave birth to pragmatism. The name was given by Charles Sanders Peirce, but only the work of William James *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (1907) marked the founding of the school that grafted onto English utilitarianism. James dedicated his book: “To the Memory of John Stuart Mill from whom I first learned the pragmatic openness of mind and whom my fancy likes to picture as our leader were he alive to-day.” As in the last instance, a product of the American mind, “pragmatism emerges first and foremost as a method of dealing with daily difficulties that American cultural and social life has entangled.” (Nedeljković, 1991: 259) For pragmatists, *the truth is* “only the expedient in the way of our thinking” and “truth is one kind of good, and not, as it is usually supposed to be a category distinct from good... And can we then keep the notion of what is better for us, and what is true for us, permanently apart? Pragmatism says no, and I fully agree with it.” (James, 1991: 49-50) Bertrand Russell, “who spent a lot of time sitting in British prisons because of his socialism and pacifism, said that belligerent pragmatism was just “American commercialism” and that was pretty well true. (Nedeljković, 1991: 262)

James himself explicitly stated that “truth lives, in fact, for the most part on a credit system. Our thoughts and beliefs ‘pass’, so long as nothing challenges them, just as banknotes pass so long as nobody refuses them.” He claimed that truths are liable to “direct face-to-face verifications somewhere, without which the fabric of truth collapses like a financial system with no cash-basis whatever. You accept my

verification of one thing, I accept yours of another. We trade on each other's truth." (James, 1991: 120)

The theoretical strive for pragmatism to "emerge as the great conciliator of metaphysicians and anti-metaphysicians, irrationalists and rationalists, worshipers and atheists, materialists and idealists" did not bring any synthesis, not even an electrical summation, "but to move the problem into one entirely new dimension, into the sphere of practical and successful". (Grlić, 1983: 195) And what is that in real life, it can be seen very well from the statement of James's successor at prestigious Harvard University Philosophy Department, Ralph Barton Perry who, after the First World War, in the troubled 1920s, stated that "the global horizontal split between the privileged and the underprivileged and the growing power and assertiveness of workers have directed, in America as well as elsewhere, their attention to internal problems and provoked, a powerful rise in national conservatism. And by no means, this representative of American democracy, who has far-reaching impact, begins his article on American consciousness, pointing out and extolling Hanson's case as an example of the purest Americanism. "Mr. Ole Hanson, Mayor of Seattle (and Washington) has become" wrote Perry "recently a kind of national hero because he did it in an energetic and completely American way." (Nedeljković, 1991: 261-262)

How should we treat those who refuse to *commit their heart and soul to the New Age*? "Some ideals are universal: to be honest, gracious, not to get drunk a lot. But there are two principles developed by present-day America that are personal to them, namely: *Commercial Art* and *Practical Sense*", written in the 1930s by American Nobel Laureate Harry Sinclair Lewis in the well-known satirical work *The Man Who Knew Coolidge*. The new trade is being separated from reality. It is not quality good that are being sold, but rapturous illusions. "The grocery customer will often prefer a second-rate apple in a handsome wrapper to a first-rate one carelessly bundled in plain tissues paper. A motorist will stand for pretty bad gasoline if the gas station employees wear handsome uniforms, greet the customer respectfully, and wipe off his windshield for free." (Sinclair: 147) And a "practical sense", when it leaves philosophy and enters life, it is the measure of all things. So, for Christmas gifts "in the old times there would have been an emphasis on impractical things for Christmas – say like books, etchings, etc. – what do they buy nowadays? First of all," Sinclair writes "there are many... suggestions for auto accessories... namely, tyre chains, tyre locks, radiator shutters, moto-meters, various antifreeze mixtures done up in handsome holly-decorated cans especially for Christmas" (Sinclair: 151), or something more romantic. A woman writes to her lover: "And Christmas is almost here. Perhaps you are

thinking of a gift for me... Yet no greater jewel will I ever crave than that of your perfect companionship; nor gift would I ask more royal than the honesty of your own heart. Let your gift to me be something intimate... And I ask you... let it be practical... A place of beauty and fragrance... Something I have always longed for – that every woman has longed for. Something a girl would so gladly have from her sweetheart... or her husband... *A CEDAR CHEST*. Then the advertisement goes on to show pictures of the manufacturer's line of cedar chests." (Sinclair, 152-153)

3.

Even World War I allowed pragmatic America to “crush” the internal rebellion of Ralph Barton Perry, to impose itself as a world power when it entered the war in 1917 and brought “order” to the exhausted and devastated Europe, once and for all have done with misconceptions about democracy. A technique was used to introduce American citizens to the war, which was more than disinformation, but at that time it was not called spin. Really, not many public relations agencies already existed. Public relations is the infrastructure of spin. And just as it was cynical for the people of the AT&T Corporation who, in order to persuade citizens to spend their goods and services and to increase profits for their Committee on Public Information (the first established bureau of a larger organization for what would be called public relations), intended to “educate the public” in 1903, so George Creel would definitely establish cynicism and hypocrisy as a part of that work, impertinently calling his committee the “House of Truth” whose goal was to take Americans to World War I. And there was not the slightest doubt that everything was used to see endless rivers of half-truths, consciously letting some things go unsaid, clear threats, patriotic emotions shaped by imputations, a pure feeling of hatred coming out from the “House of Truth” [since its official establishment on April 14th, 1917 by Executive Order no. 2594]. All available capacities of the “independent” press were engaged, all the potentials of advertising industry in boom, used university knowledge, secret services, the Hollywood industry of “moving images”, large business, small business; acting skills and theatrical skills were utilized for a fantastic network of hundreds of thousands of *Four-Minute Men* speeches that were cut out to give the ordinary, respectable person in front of his fellow citizens the opportunity to ask the toughest questions and to provide “convincing”, thoughtful answers in just 4 minutes because theater lovers knew that the full concentration of listeners lasted about 4 minutes; cartoonists, photographers, writers, informers, old and

young people were hired to produce an instant “new way of thinking”. “Never before in history,” wrote researchers Charles and Mary Beard, “had such a campaign of education been organized; never before had American citizens realized how thoroughly, how irresistibly a modern government could impose its ideas on the whole nation”. (Ewen, 1996: 119)

And the war was “sold” to the Americans. Many members of the committee named after Chief George Creel have made progress in American public life. Creel’s work is the “new force” of society. “The evil spirit”, as the believers of democracy would say, came out of the bottle and “a preoccupation with the need to adjust public attitudes and the search for techniques by which this adjustment might be achieved were also carried into the post-war period,” Stuart Ewen concluded in his work *A Social History of Spin*. “Education about war” brought “mix of sensibilities—a greater friendliness toward big business and increased attention to the importance of molding public opinion—animated the lives of a growing class of American intellectuals as they moved from war service back into civilian life.” (Ewen, 1996: 126)

4.

Truth be told, here must be stated that, regardless of the fact – or perhaps precisely for that reason! – “American practical philosophy” knows that “truth is nothing but success, namely, that truth is everything that something is individually, especially and generally achieved”, and that the measure of “American consciousness” and “Americanism” is the principle that “success alone proves everything, ability, truthfulness, objectivity, reality” (Nedeljković, 1991: 250) – the American humanities were incapable of creating the scientific basis for a total reversal. But, it is a non-pragmatic Europe – which has been “choking” in its duties to opinions for centuries and has been disgusted with the banality of techniques – generating new knowledge. Among the American world of thinkers, two French persons were very popular in the early twentieth century: Gustave Le Bon and Gabriel Tarde. Le Bon’s study *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*¹⁵ (1985) was read as a handbook for working with the masses in America. US President Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909) kept this small book within his reach and longed to meet the author. His wish came true in June 1914.

Le Bon foretold that “while all our ancient beliefs are tottering and disappearing, while the old pillars of society are giving way one by one, *the power of the crowd* is the only force that nothing menaces,

¹⁵ *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (French: *Psychologie des Foules*; literally: *Psychology of Crowds*) (Translator’s note)

and of which the prestige is continually on the increase. The age we are about to enter will in truth be *the era of crowds*.” (Le Bon, 1896: 9) The power of the crowd is blind and someone must guide and direct it, someone who will know its being and that can be achieved if it is known how to do that. The crowd is intellectually inferior and seeking for- individuals, leaders, groups. The crowd is to be directed. “Astonishment is felt at times on reading certain speeches at their weakness, and yet they had an enormous influence on the crowds which listened to them, but it is forgotten that they were intended to persuade collectivities... An orator in intimate communication with a crowd can evoke images by which it will be seduced. If he is successful his object has been attained, and twenty volumes of harangues—always the outcome of reflection—are not worth the few phrases which appealed to the brains it was required to ‘convince’.” (Le Bon, 1896: 69) Le Bon showed the limited power of mind and the unprecedented ability of hidden powers, pure imagination that should be discovered. He turned his attention to the image. The image is more powerful than the words, when addressing the masses. It evokes stronger associations. “The images evoked in their mind by a personage, an event, an accident, are almost *as lifelike as the reality*.” (Le Bon, 1896: 69, *italic* S.R.) It is crucial for those who will get down to PR jobs: “To know the art of impressing the imagination of crowds is to know at the same time the art of governing them.” (Le Bon, 1896: 74)

Gabriel Tarde, a kind of provincial self-taught sociologist, became prominent over time. For our purposes, we will take the insight of Marko Marković, Ph.D. from the French Sorbonne University. Answering the question about the Western “media attack” against the “democratic” people, PhD Marković asked the interviewer: “What do you think was the greatest sociologist that won the victory in the 20th century?... Some would say that it was Marx. You may think of one of his critics.” Those first associations are hard to refute, but PhD Marković said: “No. The winner was the French sociologist Gabriel Tarde (1843-1904)... He studied imitation and social mimetics. At first, imitation was generally a positive term for him. The child develops by imitation. And the wider the circle of people around him, the greater the number of role models, so the imitation is healthier and more successful. Of course, imitation must be subject to control and leadership until child is mature enough.” However, Tarde would find that collective imitations can be misused. The main instrument of this, according to Tarde, is “the role of the press in social life and its impact on the masses”. He realized “its great power that had to constantly grow”, its ability to create “one huge crowd, abstract and sovereign,” which he would call ‘public opinion’”. (Marković, 1994: 9)

Tarde distinguished “audience” from “crowd” in the *Opinion of Crowds* and asserted strongly: “Unfortunately, all collectives are alike in one thing: it is their unfortunate tendency to be irritated by envy and hatred. For the crowd, the need for hatred matches the need for action. Finding delight does not take them far way; but to give them an object of hatred, it means to open the way to their action, which, as we know, is essentially destructive.” PhD Marković explains that “Tarde knew that the power of the press can make ‘audience’ of one newspaper overenthusiastic about it, turning it into a crowd: ‘Discovering or inventing a new object of hate intended for the public is one of the safest means of proclaiming a man the king of journalism. There is neither country, nor any period of time when apology has had as much success as vilification.’” (Marković, 1994: 9)

Once it has been established that Le Bon and Tarde’s “laws of the crowd” and insights into the heart of the public were accurate and usable showing methods how the energy of the masses could be tamed and directed, *elite* would never leave those weapons and democracy was constantly being emptied from basic sense. Its principles, freedom, attractiveness would become – means of manipulation.

5.

The magical impact of the press, as “the mother of all revolutions,” was on the masses said Victor Hugo. Before the French Revolution, newspapers shoot up like mushrooms after rain. All classes read them. And basic literacy was enough. “There was an explosion of new publications, with at least 250 newspapers founded in the last six months of 1789. Different papers aimed at different target audiences, including peasants [to whom *La Feuille villageoise* was addressed]. The size of such news-sheets was usually small, but the *Gazette nationale* imitated the large format of the English papers... Jeremy Popkin said...that the periodical press was ‘indispensable to give legitimacy to the new law-making of the Revolution by making the process public’.” (Briggs, Burke, 2006: 138-139).

The press injected “the magic” in words such as *liberty, justice, fraternity, equality, nation, state, citizen*¹⁶ when they were used in verbal communication – “a time of intense debate, of speeches held in the National Assembly and in the political clubs, newly formed in Paris and other cities”, and then it spread to the masses where “rumor was even more important than usual, at this time when rapid succession

¹⁶ In French: *Liberté, fraternité, nation, patrie, peuple and citoyen* (Translator’s note)

of dramatic events took place”. (Briggs, Burke, 2006: 139) Writers of *A Social History of the Media*, Asa Briggs and Peter Burke stated that “the Revolution may be described as a long-running political theatre, often ‘black’, with the public executions of Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette and later of leading revolutionaries such as Danton and Robespierre as the most dramatic scenes. There were also public festivals, whether in Paris (especially the large open space of the Champ-de-Mars) or in the provinces: the Festival of the Federation, for instance, or those of the sovereignty of the people, of the Supreme Being, and of the Reason. The painter David was the designer and choreographer of some of these festivals. Their huge scale (to twentieth-century eyes, reminiscent of the Nuremberg Rally or the Mayday parades of the USSR) expressed the new democratic values of the time by allowing thousands of people to participate... The conscious mobilization of the media in order to change attitudes may be described as propaganda”. (Briggs, Burke, 2006: 140-141)

This kind of social impact in the New Age, although secular and anti-ecclesiastical in many segments, was taken from the techniques of the Catholic Church which systematically dealt with “the propagation of Christianity”. This term acquired a pejorative meaning when Protestants used it to describe the techniques of the Catholic Church, since these actions for them were hostile. “During the French Revolution, the term was adapted to politics. The revolutionary journalist Camille Desmoulins (1760-1794), for instance, compared ‘the propagation of patriotism’ with that of Christianity, while the royalists in exile denounced the ‘propaganda’ of the Revolution. The new word referred to a new phenomenon. Although the uses of images and texts to shape attitudes goes back a long way in human history, the self-consciousness and the scale of the revolutionary media campaign was something new... The French media played a necessary role both in the destruction of traditions and the invention of new ones, the attempt to create a new political culture without either Church or king. It is no accident that the phrase *opinion publique*, like the term ‘propaganda’ came into regular use at this time. Conversely, the notorious guillotine entered the language of communications, whether to refer to a machine used by printers to trim the edges of sheets, or to an attempt to end parliamentary debates on a particular topic”. (Briggs, Burke, 2006: 141)

A French visitor to America, after noting the frequent reprinting of Thomas Paine’s pamphlet *Common Sense* in the periodical press, claimed that “Without newspapers, the American Revolution would never have succeeded. Generally, it is true that “by 1800, there were 178 weeklies and 24 dailies in the USA.” (Briggs, Burke, 2006: 138) Otherwise, there were already 42 different newspapers in the American

colonies in 1775 and some of them “advanced the revolutionary cause by describing atrocities committed by the British army. Over the long term they created a national political culture through the news they reported (as in England during the Civil War) and assisted the emergence of a new imagined community, defined against the British.” (Briggs, Burke, 2006: 137) Everything that is included in the usual preparation for social change. Because, biblical knowledge is: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1, 1-5)

When Russia was shaken by the Revolution of 1905, the hunger for news also glorified the press in a way adapted to the Russian conditions. The newspapers became an important feature of peasants’ life in Russia from 1906 to 1907. Here is a statement from May 1906: “There is literally no backwoods in the country where you can’t hear the same cry/wail of people: Give us newspapers! According to the Department of Statistics of the Moscow guberniya council *zemstvo* and the answers of 700 reporters from 700 *uezd*¹⁷, it was even more evident that newspapers and magazines arrived in 79% of villages and 2-3 family publications were reserved for each village.” The newspapers were read aloud and the whole village listened to the news. Here is the announcement from the newspaper *Zemlja [The Earth]* (May 10th, 1906): ‘Paul, the peasants of a village in the Yuriev District of Vladimirsky guberniya, addressed to a literate man who read them newspaper during long winter – do not plough, do not reap, just read and tell us the news and we would do everything for you’. Paul also read newspapers during the harvest and spread the news to his neighbors, and they thanked him and praised him.” (Kara-Murza, 2015: 277) In revolutionary times, people wait for guidance, while in peaceful times, guidance is imposed on them.

6.

Ivy Lee was the name remembered symbolically as the first in the PR profession. After a brief career as a reporter for the *New York Journal*, the *New York Times* and the *New York World*, he opened a public relations agency in 1904. This is not a “secret press bureau,” he announced. “All our work is done in the open. We aim to *supply news*.” Advertising agencies also supplied news, but Lee did not think in that way. It was about specific news about certain cases. And how did they choose the news that would be *supplied*? Well, by publishing exactly the news that

¹⁷ *Uezd* is the same as *raion*, but the term was used before 1920. It was administrative territorial subdivision of the Russian Empire. (Translator’s note)

someone paid to be *supplied*. Despite this small defect, Lee also explained that they “guaranteed” high level of: *Accuracy, Authenticity and Interest!* And promised to “present only topics of real interest, phrased so as to attract the attention of both editors and readers – never sensational, never libelous, always accurate, always trustworthy, always readable”. (Ewen, 1996: 76) And so, one afternoon in the spring of 1914, he was sitting in an office, reading a newspaper, and it seemed to him that it would be another usually quiet day when John D. Rockefeller came in. And why would Mr. Rockefeller deal with *supplying* the news?

John D. Rockefeller and his Standard Oil provoked “one of the most dramatic conflicts between capital and labor in history” on April 20th, 1914. Police that went to “bring striking men to their senses” who lived in the miserable tent settlement in Ludlow, Colorado, on Easter in 1914, because those men had been fighting for one dollar more since September 1913 – killed three women and eleven children of miners’. “The unfortunate wretches dug holes to protect themselves from rifle fire, but women and children perished there like rats in a trap over which fire broke out”, the *New York Times* described “the Ludlow Massacre”, on April 21st, 1914.

As is customary when it comes to a conflict between the nameless poor people and the most powerful ones – to whom the capitalist state is the Coordination Center and Center where they can accomplish their historical missions – the US Commission on Industrial Relations instituted the first in a series of hearings. John D. Rockefeller Jr. “denied any involvement in this event”: The Ludlow Massacre did not happen. The conflict began as a panicky fight for life of two small militia groups upon the whole miners’ tent colony...” “A century later, the world would be confronted with such scenes – unarmed police protecting the sanctities, “law and property”, and miserable people armed to the teeth who, in reality, did not even have to eat: that was what happened according to Rockefeller, and there, following the logic of these scenarios, “well paid agitators sent by the union” get involved into this. The logic of democracy of the rich is that every organization, except for their own, is suspicious and that any payment that does not come from them is the fruit of the conspirators and enemies of the system. In order to keep this anti-common sense paradigm in society and that the story of a particular massacre does not alarm people, the richest man asked the owner of the agency for “the news engineering” because at that time these masters who created “different reality” had not been called public relations advisers yet.

Regarding the “Ludlow Massacre”, Lee immediately started to produce a series of circulars entitled *Facts Concerning the Strike in Colorado for Industrial Freedom*. Between June and September, these

“facts concerning the case”, came out every four to seven days and were sent to ministers, editors, teachers, businessmen. One bulletin presented distorted documentation purporting to demonstrate that “editorial sentiment” in Colorado’s newspapers was overwhelmingly against the strikers. “Disregarded in this report was the fact that those editors who were surveyed all worked for papers run by the coal companies”. (Ewen, 1996: 79) One more “fact” was presented that Mother Jones, an eighty-two-year-old union organizer, was “a prostitute and the keeper of a house of prostitution”. (“Never sensational, never libelous, always accurate, always trustworthy, always readable.”)

Ivy Lee “found” a pattern that would become a classic tool of work. It was the tool of all time. “Another bulletin offered an authentically couched report from Helen Grenfell, identified simply as the ‘Vice-president of the Law and Order League of Colorado’.” Her apparently firsthand account certified that the battle at Ludlow was initiated by the strikers and that fires that engulfed the miner’s tent colony broke out by accident. However, “unmentioned in the report were the facts that Grenfell was not, in fact, an eyewitness to events at Ludlow and that she was the wife of a railroad official whose company profited from carrying Colorado coal.” (Ewen, 1996: 76)

Still, it was a devilishly difficult case, so in January 1915, he was called to testify before the US Commission on Industrial Relations that initiated an investigation of the carnage at Ludlow, and Ivy Lee got the opportunity to explain his theory of facts in his own words to the commission’s chairman, Frank P. Walsh.

Walsh: Mr. Rockefeller had told you to be sure and get the truth?

Lee: Yes.

Walsh: How did you go about it?

Lee: By the truth, Mr. Chairman, I mean the truth about the operators’ case. What I was to do was to advise and get their case into proper shape for them.

Walsh: You got your information entirely from them, then?

Lee: Yes.

Walsh: When they gave you newspaper clippings purporting to tell certain facts, did you ask them whether they knew they were true?

Lee: I did not.

Walsh: Did you ask them from what newspapers they were taken?

Lee: I really cannot remember. I believe so, Mr. Chairman.

Walsh: Did you know that their attorney owned one of the newspapers...?

Lee: No...

Walsh: You were out there to give the facts, the truth about the strike?

Lee: Yes, the truth as the operators saw it. I was there to help them state their case. I was to help them get these facts before the greatest number of people likely to read them.

Walsh: What personal effort did you ever make to ascertain that the facts given you by the operators were correct?

Lee: None whatever. I had no responsibility for the facts and no duty beyond compiling them and getting them into the best form for publicity work. I took the facts that Mr. Welborn gave me on his word. I have no reason to believe that word was not given in perfectly good faith.” (Ewen, 1996: 79-80)

7.

This is the essence of a PR point of view related to the world, but “the father of PR” was, nevertheless, a man of greater knowledge and authority. And Edward Louis Bernays liked to link his work to the work of Walter Lippman, although these were two different paths. Lippman is one of the greatest journalists in history and intellectuals, not just of America, and Bernays is a leading “master of manipulation”, a connoisseur of skills. In 1922, Lippman published a classic work *Public Opinion*, demonstrating most clearly that democracy without manipulation and a “hidden hand” of control is impossible in modern society. He would add to the everlasting dilemmas, whether democratic governance after the Athenian squares was possible at all, evidence that a human being in the increasingly complex world and more dissected division of labor in late capitalist society cannot use so much information rationally and effectively... “A citizen cannot form a true public opinion. Public opinion is either created or it is a phantom at the national level – in any case it is not the work of a citizen supplied with knowledge and involved in a deep thought process... His sharp criticism shocked many people who disagreed with his arguments – the most famous was the case of John Dewey, who soon published the book *The Public and Its Problems*.” (McAllister, 2012) The controversy between Lippman and Dewey is a typical exchange of opinion in American public opinion in the given coordinates, and then there is still debate today who of these two Democratic thinkers was right and who was proven right with time. People mostly trusted Lippman. Because, “before the war (First, noted S.R.) Progressive intellectuals had espoused the Enlightenment dictum that people — at least middle-class people — were essentially rational and capable of evaluating information and then of making intelligent decisions. In the context of the Committee on Public Information (Creel’s mission, noted S.R.), ‘public opinion’ became something to be mobilized and managed; the ‘public mind’

was now seen as an entity to be manufactured, not reasoned with.” (Ewen, 1996: 127) And this was exactly what the book *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, published in 1923, promoted. Author Edward Bernays, who, like Lippman, had experience with the Committee on Public Information, had just started to create distrust of the citizens in a democracy, but the intellectual level of this work could not compete with Dewey’s alluring thought. However, precisely the shortcomings of that book would become its greatest power.

“Lippman treated public opinion on a purely theoretical basis. He never got down to matters of changing it. He talked about it as if he were a sociologist discussing a social caste system... abstractly. And I was surprised. Here he was, a working newspaper man”. (Ewen, 1996:159), Bernays would talk about that many years later at time when he was already proclaimed as the ‘father of PR.’ While Lippman was “dying in the beauty of writing” and delivering brilliant discussions to the public, Bernays published his handbooks, such as *Crystallizing Public Opinion* or *Propaganda*, as his other title was entitled. Freud’s nephew, who would rush to Uncle Zigy’s in Vienna with a box of first-class Cuban cigars if he needed help, explained the difference between advertising and public relations. To illustrate this, he took bacon for example- to enhance the sale of bacon. (Ewen, 1996: 165) Old-style publicity would shout from the rooftops encouraging consumers to ‘eat more bacon’. Eat more bacon because it is cheaper, good, it gives you reserve energy. However, the consequence of such a campaign would be temporary and minimal according to Bernays. As soon as the advertisement is withdrawn, the customer forgets it because he/she is occupied with new advertisements. The one who knows how to use “the principles of mass psychology” will make a person think about it unconsciously. How? The modern publicists will pay the physicians to whom they trust to say publicly that “it is wholesome to eat bacon” and the quality of bacon is not so important now, because “a mathematical certainty will show that large numbers of persons will follow the advice of their doctors”, because someone who does all this understands the psychological relation of dependence of men upon their physicians”. (Ewen, 1996: 165) Therefore, they are not selling goods, but the credibility of authority that is the base of society’s trust in important values.

8.

When Sloan Wilson’s novel *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1955) appeared in the 1950s, the best seller was sold in two million copies, and a film with Gregory Peck was made in America in 1956 – still there was a kind of fear of the so-called profession of *popularization* (as it was

then called public relations and advertising). A wizard of public relations, Ralph Hopkins, “a man whose influence is felt in almost every home in America, every home which has a radio or television set; this is a man who without ever seeking personal fame has been behind almost every *public-service* advertising campaign which has taken place in the past twenty years” (Wilson, 1959: 293), ready to create his successor from a talented thirty-year-old, but he refused to do so for his habitus. That seems like a fairy tale today: *Once Upon a Time...*

Tom Rath is in a feverish pursuit of money – to change his house, provide his children with education – but war heroes in a chaotic peace cannot reject the moral vertical and soul. That money is neither the most important nor almighty dollar, they have been taught in the harshest schools where even life does not have a price. A man, who had to kill an eighteen-year-old man in German uniform to get his fur coat and thus save his bare life, could not comply with the moral code of phalanx of “gray flannel suit”. “I really don’t know what I was looking for when I got back from the war, but it seemed as though all I could see was a lot of bright young men in grey flannel suits rushing around New York in a frantic parade to nowhere. They seemed to me to be pursuing neither ideals nor happiness — they were pursuing a routine. For a long while I thought I was on the sidelines watching the parade, and it was quite a shock to glance down and see that I too was wearing a grey flannel suit.” (Wilson, 1959:367)

When he decided to start working in Federal Radio – Association (TV was still in its infancy) for better salary, he found the Mental Health project. “Do you know that more hospital beds are occupied by the mentally ill than by all the cancer, heart, and polio patients put together?” (Wilson, 1959:60), Hopkins said, and he knew that was the great opportunity. And public relations operation could start. “Good Lord, he thought, they’re going to sell mental health the way they sell cigarettes!” (Wilson, 1959: 246), wondered naive Tom Rath before a big convention of medical men in Atlantic City. The irony of fate was that the public relations wizard won consent for the project with a speech full of sincere and naive hope, just written by Tom.

Public relations is a huge shop. Spin must flow naturally like sea waves on a sandy beach. It requires the right people first, a guarantee that this is a job of undoubted credibility. The more socially harmful the business is, the greater the guarantee. “Begin by asking about a dozen people to form an Exploratory Committee,” Hopkins ordered. “Choose the people we’ll eventually want as trustees. For labour, Bill Krisky. For a Catholic, Fred Bellows. For a Jew, Abraham Goldberg. For a liberal, Mary Harkins. For a hard-shelled businessman, I’ll do. For a Democrat, Pete Cronin. For a Republican, Nat Higgins.”

How many is that?"

"Seven," Tom said. He was taking notes furiously.

"All right. For a Negro, Herbert Shiw. For radio and television, I'll do. Sam Peterson for newspapers. Ted Bailey for mass circulation magazines. We should have an intellectual! Make it Harold Norton, up at Harvard."

"That's eleven," Tom said.

"What are we missing? Oh, somebody from the movies. Ross Pattern."

Committee would meet at the Hotel Waldorf – Astoria. What is missing? Occupation! And "Now an advisory medical panel. Make it seven members. The heads of all the major medical associations and fill up the rest of it with the best psychiatrists — make sure you don't get the crackpots." (Wilson, 1959: 298) Crackpots cannot immediately understand what is being discussed and they are unpredictable. When you secure yourself from them, the mental health "sales" can begin.

While preparing for a therapy, ordinary America seems normal: still, it is 2:1 (that is, the ratio from the novel) for the opening of a new public school in spite of the landowners' anti-campaign; a judge still with undisguised affection cares for the survival of an unhappy marriage in America; that America, without false disgust and with respect, confronted the wartime deeds of its soldiers, who would have taken all the famous generals and strategists to stand in the dock in Nuremberg, for instance, where they would have been imprisoned longer than general Krstić or general Lazarević in The Hague and even a kind Roosevelt, though ill, could end up as Slobodan Milošević if the rules of the public relations world of conceived "joint criminal enterprise" in their fight with the Germans and Japanese had been applied.

This all sounds like a crude joke in America where the Government is a public relations project, a nation infected with the PR truth and judges adhere to the PR law. Because the first among those in the "gray flannel suit" was diagnosed (by the same doctors with whom he developed "mental health" of America): it is about "a deep guilt complex, and that his constant work was simply an effort to punish and perhaps kill himself. The guilt complex was probably based on a fear of homosexuality, psychoanalyst had said." (Wilson, 1959: 213) And when an American warrior so disturbed by the peace of America, a paratrooper who killed seventeen people by mistake – including his best friend in war and lost an illegitimate son in the gloomy suburbs of Rome in 1944 – despite all, refused an offer that had not be declined, he should be ready to be in the forefront of the "new campaign", a PR wizard "suddenly whirled and faced him. 'Somebody has to do the big jobs!' he said passionately. 'This world was built by men like me! To really do a job, you

have to live it, body and soul! You people who just give half your mind to your work are riding on our backs!”

“I know it,” Tom said. (Wilson, 1959: 342)

Thus the victory of the warriors turned into Pyrrhic victory.¹⁸ Four decades later, James Twitchell, who also read *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, would write ... “Quite the reverse – this view of public relations and advertising has created an even greater desire for me to be a part of it. If Madison Avenue really works as these authors have argued, and then this is exactly the place for me.” (Twitchell, 1995: xi) The civilization of “gray flannel suit” could not be stopped by moral principles and concern for society. Warriors who knew about the horrors in which public relations drugs can only numb pain but not eliminate it were erased from the memories of generations prepared by the public relations industry to “think only about the future.” Public relations civilization has crossed the continent and the world. The road to a new war is clear.

9.

Edward Bernays described the spirit of the public relations using Napoleon’s words: “Circumstance? I make circumstances!” (Ewen, 1996: 167) The public relations counsels correctly understood “the spirit of the times” when it became clear that the imagined ideal of an “informed citizen” had already been stored in the dream mausoleum of democracy and that the citizen could only consume chewed information turned into *news*, seasoned, cut out, patched, put together, packed. The reality has already been subjectivized, interpreted if the raw information is taken. Lippman wrote memorable pages about this in *Public Opinion*. And finally Bernays found out to eradicate the news from *reality*: they were already “simplified and dramatized”, directed by the publisher’s mind that “influence the instincts”, so a skilled man with certain interests and knowledge concluded that *the news* could be created just based on *its ideas*. Such news, without connection to reality, will be convincing enough. “In order to appeal to the instincts and fundamental emotions of the public... the public relations counsel must create news around his ideas... He must isolate ideas and develop them into events so that they can be more readily understood and so that they may claim attention as news.” (Bernays, 1923:171)

How to explain the motive and horizon of a man who understands that the time has come for total social engineering? Professor Marvin N. Olasky claimed that this was his view of religion after speaking with Bernays. “Bernays’ fundamental faith is a lack of faith in God,” Olasky

¹⁸ A *Pyrrhic victory* is a victory in which the person who wins suffers so much that the victory was hardly worth winning. (Translator’s note)

explained. "He saw what he called in our interview 'a world without God' rapidly descending into social chaos. Therefore, he contended that social manipulation by public relations counselors was justified by the end of creating man-made gods who could assert subtle social control and prevent disaster... Management is necessary behind the scenes, not only for personal convenience, but also for the salvation of society." (Tye, 2002: 98) And when a person becomes God, then he does not have to obey God's order of things, but can establish his "divine" order uncontrollably. Bernays "promoted cigarettes, which he suspected were deadly, at the same time he was promoting national health insurance." (Tye, 2002: 98) For his client, the *United Fruit Company* made Americans like bananas, explained them how healthy they were, and when Guatemala's healthy fruit growers chose a left-wing government for themselves to live better, he was in front of the war campaign in which "Jacobo Arbenz Guzman was demonized, as Saddam Hussein would be half a century later and in order to make American public opinion believe it, it was a war against tyranny. The real gain of that harsh policy had been the *United Fruit Company*, whose banana-republic was jeopardized by Guatemala's new left-wing government". (Tye, 2002: viii) When there is no God, it is normal that people are no longer brothers, that morality is "in mace", that the Truth is the shadow of dead beautiful girl that died many years ago and Justice the blind woman we met in the legend of the ancient Romans and for whom we felt pity in secret for centuries. Democracy is part of the business policy of large corporations. Indeed, Nikolai Berdyaev, who was one of Bernays' contemporaries, called it "Satanocracy", but he came from the East.

A democratic society is a "controlled chaos" and the best controller for it (and citizens must be happy to receive the "best one") is the "invisible", "soft" hand of an engineer that Đuro Šušnjić would describe as "fishermen of human souls" (Šušnjić, 2011). For Bernays, propaganda is one of the most important social activities. He wrote that "the only difference between 'propaganda' and 'education,' really, is in the point of view. The advocacy of what we believe in is education. The advocacy of what we do not believe in is propaganda". (Tye, 2002: 97). Thus, a world is ingrained into something where public relations managers, advertising strategists and architects of calculated spectacles are rapidly producing notions of public discourse and then of the whole episode of history.

10.

Although the (increasingly) powerful public relations community would spend a lot of money to present their greatest skills and self as a fair girl who has just once walked past a brothel, the result would not

be as desired one. The following is a confession of an important writer of a *successful Bible of public relations*: “Citizens quite often run into the names such as ‘PR’, ‘public relations’ and ‘flak’ in media when reporting on oil slicks, leakage of toxic material, corruption in city hall, dirty political games and etc. Media rarely links public relations with positive stories about organizations and their successes”. (Cutlip, Center, Broom, 2006: 32) Powerless civic beings must accept many of Great Lies, but they cannot yet celebrate “liars.” As they spend their bonuses after successful ‘operations’, the rest of citizens are catching at a straw in panic. “Books like *PR! A Social History of Spin* and *Toxic Sludge is Good for You*, on behalf of clients and goals of problematic value, provide selective post hoc analyses of the print agents’ activities. There is little demand for books that talk about the well-done work of public relations employees, on behalf of clients and goals that deserve public support”. (Cutlip, Center, Broom, 2006: 32)

However, the public relations business has managed to separate itself, at the level of global halo effect with a sharp cut, from one of the most successful public relations managers in the last century. When foreign correspondent of the Hearst newspapers, Karl von Wiegand visited Joseph Goebbels in 1933, he saw Bernays’ *Crystallizing Public Opinion* in his library. Bernays “established principles, practices and ethics of the new profession” in that book. (Tye, 2002: 111) Goebbels, as a remarkable eclectic, connected Russian revolutionary and American propaganda. For a man who read Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy as ‘obsessed’ and considered himself a revolutionary, eager to destroy what was destroying him, the appearance of Sergei Eisenstein’s film *October* (1927) at cinemas in Berlin was just another great lesson: “So, that is a revolution. Much can be learned from the Bolsheviks, first of all in propaganda... But ingenious artistic solutions can be ineffective ... even counterproductive, but it is not engaged and brought under total control. Goebbels’ genius (“evil one” as it is said, the author’s comment) could not have missed the fact that solution had already been found: an American advertising. Goebbels had the best of that world as a role model: Coca-Cola! From the soft drink manufacturer in Atlanta [he taught] that advertising must pervade all spheres of life, it must be total.” (Reljić, 2011: 87) Nevertheless, the winners after 1945 attributed repeating lies 100 times to turn them into truth only to him.

“While scientists are still debating to what extent the Nazis used Bernays’ works, there is no doubt that Goebbels used almost identical techniques to those used by Bernays.” (Tye, 2002: 111) It was a blow to the subconsciousness. Wilhem Reich, a psychoanalyst with experience in working among working masses in the 1930s in the war for human souls against Goebbels, wrote that “experience teaches that the

majority of these ‘nonpolitical’ people can hardly be made to listen to anything about their socio-economic situation, whereas they are very accessible to the mystical claptrap of a National Socialist, despite the fact that the latter makes very little mention of economic interests.” Reich sees a Nazi propagandist who works “with faith and mysticism, in other words, with sexual, libidinous methods” used to gain trust “not because the fascist program makes a greater impression on him than the liberal program, but because in his devotion to the führer¹⁹ and the führer’s ideology, he experiences a momentary release from his unrelenting inner tension, because he is able to give his conflicts a different form and in this way to solve them. Finally, this orientation enables him to see the fascists as revolutionaries and Hitler as the German Lenin”. (Reich, 1981: 210, italics S. R.)

The American advertising is also used “by repetition of the same formula again and again”, Erich From will remind. These approaches are irrational in every propaganda. When politicians are ‘sold’ to a voter as Reich describes – then From, who has taken upon himself a task of describing “reasons for fascination” of some societies in Europe, can conclude: “Like the effect of advertising upon the customer leads to the feeling of surrender”, and the methods of political propaganda “tend to increase the feeling of insignificance of the individual voter”. It seems that “the clear and rational appeals to his thinking are rather the exception than the rule in political propaganda--even in democratic countries.” (From, 1969: 126)

When manipulation techniques are developed, both within the moral framework and with “faith in God”, they can be used for the worst things, but when they are bare and carry just the power of the user as constraints, then it is difficult to imagine the extent of inhumanity.

“Skillfully using Jews as a scapegoat and Hitler as the embodiment of righteousness, manipulating the media about the Nazis’ success on the battlefield and concealing extermination campaigns; spread [Goebbels] the unprecedented power of propaganda in the country, just as Bernays advised in *Crystallizing Public Opinion*”. (Tye, 2002: 111) Edward Bernays, who knew how to answer and explain everything, did not take part in discussions about that issue. He only recounted in his 1965 autobiography that he was ‘shocked’ to see his book on Goebbels’ shelf. But I knew that any human activity can be used for social purposes or misused for antisocial ones. Obviously the attack on the Jews of Germany was not emotional outburst of the Nazis, but a deliberate, planned campaign.” And Edward Bernays was inadvertently pulled into it.” (Tye, 2002: 111)

¹⁹ *Führer* is a German word meaning “leader” or “guide”. (Translator’s note)

And Bernays' senior colleague, Ivy Lee, who already published that *Declaration of Principles* for a 'new profession' in 1906, the personal adviser to John Rockefeller Younger, was 'pulled into' Goebbels' system. He worked for I.G. Farben which was again closely connected to Standard Oil by important contracts. As it was carefully written in that Bible of 'successful public relations', Ivy Lee "advised the cartel after Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany and the Nazis had taken control. Headlines in the press at that time made a sensation of his work- 'LEE GIVES ADVICE TO THE NAZIS' and 'LEE EXPOSED AS HITLER'S PRESS AGENT'. Although he did not receive money directly from the Nazi government, Lee received an annual fee of \$ 25,000 plus expenses (a large sum at that time) of his engagement in 1933 from I.G. Farben Company, until the company terminated the contract immediately after his death in 1934." (Cutlip, Center, Broom, 2006: 115) However, an old Lee was a man stuck in the past. He behaved like a being that was a little bit afraid of 'punishment of God'. Due to the fact that "when reporters in Baden (Germany) reached him after the news about his work with I.G. Farben was released; he became uncommunicative and refused to issue a statement." (Cutlip, Center, Broom, 2006: 115) Moral of his successors, of course, would never allow a public relations manager to admit a mistake and not to mention blame. There is no such resource that should not be used. There is no intellectual responsibility that can appear as a limit. The only limit is the budget available to the agency.

11.

Spin is a total manipulation of a society where "God is dead" (Nietzsche), which endorses democracy as a necessary evil (Bernays, 1928) and in which the Being should face with the ultimate option: "There is only one really serious philosophical question, and that is suicide. Deciding whether or not life is worth living is to answer the fundamental question in philosophy" (Camus, 1989: 15). The modern totality of manipulation reaches the scale of disease like propaganda addiction. Jacques Ellul noted that the 'sobering' of German society in 1945, just 'getting off' strong Goebbels' propaganda, was painful and dramatic. The same sentiment was expressed by Americans, after certain doses of propaganda that they received from Bernays and society during the war and after the victory was proclaimed (Ellul, 1965). "Lying in politics" (Arendt, 1994) is produced in constant doses; it arrives everywhere at any time. "Consensus engineering" to preserve the social *status quo* directs the development of modern technologies. At the beginning of the 21st century, man also appeased his desire to peek into the cosmos.

The project of this age is to “be digital”; the “intellectual act” is “tweet”; the main party and the most active social life is on “Facebook”. The sophisticated word takes back rapidly in front of an increasingly raw image. The magic word is “the image”. Grammatical structures, uppercase letters, and logically precise messages disappear in most mass written communication, and this is justified because of the speed of writing. The communication of modern being is dominated by the universal abbreviation “OK”.

Zamyatin’s idea of blind force and technology that has executive authority on behalf of it has come down to the Earth. Orwell’s cry in front of the iron curtain of Newspeak, the Western spin industry pushed the East in the 1950s (and this was probably the largest spin action ever, bigger than the Berlin Wall, Iraq, FRY) and that now a certain group of marginalized connoisseurs who have preserved in their memory the detail that in these societies there were once strange irrational beings called “intellectuals” – would whisper that Eric Arthur Blair (Orwell’s real name) did not refer only to the Soviet Union. Today, it is clear that the mind that invented *collateral damage* goes far beyond Stalin’s achievements, which, of course, is not anything strange – this society is led by *progressivism*. “I make progress every day in every way”, (Kusturica) on the road that my pragmatic and immoral thought has taken me. *Progress* does not suffer from lagging behind in anything.

“Human progress down to the seventeenth century was natural and spontaneous and was in no sense the result of any collective effort to realize a conscious goal of racial and cultural advancement” (Barnes I, 1982:65). And later “more than 99 per cent of man’s existence upon the planet” science and rationalism between 1500 and 1800 “changed the stream of consciousness” and the goal is not the sky, but it is taken from ‘other worlds’ that were not available for alive man. “The ancient Jews, holding to the doctrine of the ‘Fall’ of man, logically believed that perfection was to be found in the past rather than to be sought in the future. The classical writers shared to some degree a comparable notion, namely, the dogma of a decline from a golden age. Even more popular with the Greeks and Romans was the conception of the cyclical nature of human development. Culture would rise to a certain point and then decline to a level comparable to that which had existed at the beginning. Then the process would start all over again, and the cycle would be repeated. The Christians took over the Jewish notion of the ‘Fall’ of man and combined it with the pagan view of the decline from a golden age...The state of blessedness is to be attained only in the world to come. The Last Judgment and the end of things earthly was, according to the Christian view as stated in the Book of Revelation, to be preceded by unusually horrible and devastating earthly occurrences.” (Barnes I, 1982: 65)

The world of progress, cynically, was erected on a renaissance rebirth of the great achievements of Greek and Roman culture in particular. And the Enlightenment is, in fact, the center or the node of the New Age. And whatever was the consequence of that stream of consciousness – even the two world wars – there was enough enlightened arrogance and inertia of civilization to focus our attention on the “bright future” that comes from this decline. Spin is the soul of that progress

Dialectic of Enlightenment (Horkheimer, Adorno 1989) is a warning message that has only reached intellectual levels. Although the citizens of the New Age know very little about Francis Bacon or Descartes, they united “in decrying the authority of the past. Bacon had contended that the moderns were superior to the ancients and suggested that utopia might be secured through applying science to human problems”. (Barnes I, 1982:65) Nevertheless, the problem with the idea of progress is that since it has no supreme authority and does not consider the role models of the past important, it cannot even formally separate ‘good’ from ‘evil’, ‘justice’ from ‘injustice’, ‘truth’ from ‘lies’. Criteria are established by power relations (which is not historically new), but since nothing is above a Man, neither higher being, nor a measure of tradition, then every powerful man whose arguments of the force of that moment are strongest can feel like God and make divine decisions. Thus, in the world of socially legitimized manipulation, the quality of what is called spin is determined by bare power. So, what is the difference between Edward Bernays and Joseph Goebbels? The difference is in the fact that the first one was on the side of the winner in 1945.

But the satisfaction of the project ‘paradise on Earth’ is rapidly diminishing and the agony of the future is already felt. It seems that putting on black glasses before the obviousness of cycle in capitalism cannot solve problems. On the contrary, it just piles them up. As it had already happened in the 19th century and for what the solution was the Great War. And what is the selective memory of Timothy Garton Ash, from the beginning of this text, about the significance of Orwell’s warning? It is a sign that the winner no longer feels safe as he/she felt before. And that time has come to put on the prescription for spin – the explanation for the contradictions as well. So far, these kinds of recipes have not been prescribed.

Translated from Serbian by
Jovana Marinković

MIŠA ĐURKOVIĆ

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION OF SERBIA BETWEEN NORMATIVISM AND GEOPOLITICS

The issue of stipulation during EU enlargement is a very interesting and, in fact, academically a very poorly researched area of European integration. There are not almost serious and impartial comparative studies of the conditions that Brussels has placed before potential and current candidates.¹ Officially and politically correct narration of *enlargement* seeks to portray it as a process in which individual states are reformed and adapted to existing standards in accordance with the universal normative criteria, so that they can then function as a fully integrated part of the unique European space. Things don't really work that way in practice. The geopolitical, economic and foreign policy interests of the largest members and the USA as an external country that maintains the balance are often far more important than the proclaimed normative criteria. Thus, for instance, the Mečijer's case (isolation of Slovakia in the second half of the 1990s) presents as intolerable undemocratic behavior, the tyranny of the majority, etc. while a real geopolitical analysis would point to other sources of its unpopularity in the West: refusal to destroy the domestic metal complex and preserve close economic ties with Russia.²

We will show that the practice of enlargement is taking place in the gray zone between proclaimed normativism and the real geopolitical

¹ A study written by Delević Đilas was published here in 2001, which therefore did not cover the evolution of conditionality policy after 2000. For a good and more recent overview of standard existing papers on EU conditionality policy, see Todorović, 2010

² For a more detailed treatment of the subject see Hofbauer, (2004), p. 179–195.

struggle of the great powers for their interests using Serbia as an example in this text.

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In an introduction to the book *Construction and Deconstruction of the State* [*Gradnja i razgradnja države*], published in 2008, summarizing the practical experience of a man who has been an important part of the state administration for the past eight years (senior political adviser to President and later Prime Minister Koštunica and then Minister), Slobodan Samardžić concluded that in case of Serbia, the European Union first intervened directly in three segments of statehood that it had never interfered with before: the issue of state borders, the question of internal government organization, and the question of state identity.³

However, this important statement must be amended by reminiscence about the fact that EU countries, together with the United States, financed and prepared a change of government in 2000 and the new regime came to power in Serbia changing the country's geopolitical orientation completely. The EU had previously intervened in the domestic politics of potential candidates, but in this case it was supported by the revolution that Serbia had just accepted to focus its foreign policy orientation on Brussels. In addition, the new regime accepted giving up its pretensions to succession status as a foreign policy successor of the subjectivity of the SFRY, and agreed that FRY should enter all international institutions in accordance with Western orders, as only one of the countries that emerged upon the dissolution of the former SFRY. All this constitutes a kind of original sin of the new democratic authorities for which it can be logically said in certain sense that caused such behavior of the USA and Brussels. After 2000, Serbia was observed, not as an independent state, but as a protectorate that was taken over by foreigners who put it more and more under their control.⁴

Moreover, President Koštunica accepted that the EU should be directly involved in the process of redefining internal relations between Serbia and Montenegro, thereby making the Union a legitimate and even legal participant in domestic disputes over the reorganization of the internal structure of the state in 2002.

³ Samardžić, (2008), p.26.

⁴ The fact is that all leading politicians came to power with the support or blessing of these Western countries, and that a large part of political and economic elite conducted according to the classical comprador model, whereby they were willing to act against national interests for their own interest.

If we take a look at the history of the EEC⁵ and the EU enlargement, we will notice two things:

The issue of enlargement was marked from the very beginning by political and geopolitical motives. Looking backwards, we could remember that De Gaulle had been preventing Britain from joining the EU for almost a decade, insisting that EU would be a sort of an “Atlanticist” Trojan horse that would inside stop further integration and independence of the continent.⁶ As it is well known, France changed its attitude only after his replacement, allowing the first enlargement to nine members in 1973. There are other similar cases: the admission of the Baltic States – above all, to prevent Russia from coming back to the Baltic Sea again; the admission of Cyprus with all its problems, or the urgent entry of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 to strengthen the sanitary cordon⁷ towards Russia. We will mention here another example when Greece joined EU (1981) against the Commission’s recommendations which claimed that this country was unprepared for membership in 1979. The geopolitical framework of the Cold War, which was then given a new motive, caused Brussels to accelerate the reception of this strategically important country where a very strong left-winger trend developed. Finally, the question of Turkey arose as an evident geopolitical, geo-economic and religious issue.

Brussels also posed very strange geopolitical conditions to other countries, such as for Bulgarians to demand that the European currency in Bulgarian should be pronounced as *euro* rather than *evro* as it would sound in Bulgarian language.⁸ So, these are conditions that have encroached on identity issues, exerting pressure on the state to adapt in a strange way to the undefined identity framework of the community. When it comes to Macedonia (which now has official “candidate” status), the Ohrid Agreement of 2001 was reached as a condition for further progress. It de facto has changed the internal order and it can be said that the identity of the state has shifted in the direction of the consociational community.

In any case, as a starting hypothetical claim, Samardžić’s thesis has a very strong heuristic value.⁹ This set of restrictions of each sub-

⁵ EEC stands for European Economic Community (Translator’s note)

⁶ The integral text of his famous press conference that took place on 16th May, 1967 can be seen on the page <http://fresques.ina.fr/de-gaulle/fiche-media/Gaulle00129/conference-depresse-du-16-mai-1967.html>. Excerpts regarding the reasons for veto on Britain’s entry can be viewed on the page <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1967-degaulle-non-uk.html>

⁷ *Cordon sanitaire* is French phrase that, literally translated, means “sanitary cordon”. It originally denoted a barrier implemented to stop the spread of infectious diseases. (Translator’s note)

⁸ See: <http://euobserver.com/political/24957>

⁹ “problem-solving value” (Translator’s note)

sequent stage in the process of enlargement has never been seen before and we will try to show this in this paper.

*

The story about EU enlargement has a series of interesting and different aspects. For example, one big question is whether there are limits to Union enlargement? If the Union (formerly the EEC) since its creation has been faced with the open-ended question of further enlargement, the relevant question is raised whether it can exist at all as a close community with precise borders, without pretensions to further enlargement. In short, can the EU exist without an enlargement policy as its integral part? Will Turkey once become a member; will the *Eastern Partnership* grow into a policy of full integration of the area? Is it possible to imagine Russia as a space which is in some kind of close community with the EU, etc.?

But unfortunately, these most interesting questions are easily dismissed as too speculative and too geopolitical, while the narrative of enlargement is mostly about reminiscence of the normative framework and insisting that candidates adapt to it. What does actually establish the normative framework for EU enlargement?

In fact, it basically consists of three segments. Firstly, there comes the well-known Copenhagen Criteria of 1993, in which EU leaders summarized the basic political, economic and legal criteria that a candidate country must meet. It comes down to the demand for this country to become a liberal democracy that respects the fundamental rights of individuals and minorities, then to become a sustainable and competitive capitalist economy able to fully integrate into the European division of labour and the European market and finally to incorporate *acquis communautaire*¹⁰ into its legislation. These criteria were created as a result of Brussels' need to present relatively clear criteria for the direction of a desirable transition to potential candidates (above all former communist states).

The second level consists of the Memoranda of Association, the judgments of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) and other European courts, as well as other decisions of higher European courts whose consequences should be integrated into their internal system.

Finally, the third level is the practice of enlargement so far, which should also be the basis for future cases. It would be logical that the conditions that were applied to earlier candidates were still in effect when, for instance, it comes to Serbia. As we shall see, this is not exactly the case.

¹⁰ The Community *acquis* sometimes called the *EU acquis* and often shortened to *acquis* (Translator's note)

On the one hand, there is this normative framework which should be obligatory for Serbia as it is obligatory for the others and on the other hand, we encounter the objective reality of Brussels' policy of conditionality for Serbia's EU integration. Thus, we see a brutal stipulation, an extremely hostile attitude, a violation of our own principles and norms, their change and keeping up with the pace of change, constantly moving borders, etc.

In addition, there is the huge role of the United States in the process of "European integration" of Serbia (?): This whole process (like the Hague Tribunal) is actually used to condition in the direction of achieving primarily geopolitical goals that the USA, Britain and other Western powers and protagonists set in the late 1980s. In this particular case, European integration is used as a geopolitical weapon.

We will provide you with a few concrete examples.

The Problem of Territory and Country Borders

In most instances except for Cyprus, the EU dealt with states that had sovereign territories with a central government that exert full control over each part of its territory. In our case, the FRY (Brussels established relations with FRY after 2000) was not regarded as a single political community, although it was recognized as having an international legal status. Namely, Kosmet has been treated as a separate entity since 1999 and in fact sanctioned and supported Montenegro's secession which was rounded off as a third separate entity. In the following years, European integration was used as an instrument for the final separation of the SFRY along its internal borders, as set out in the Constitution adopted in 1974. When it comes to Montenegro, as well as Kosmet, Brussels acted against the principle of greater integration and drawing European people together ("ever closer Union"). While they proclaimed the need for reconciliation, regional integration (including the story of regional ownership) on the one hand, in practice they supported both separatism and further splitting of the FRY.¹¹

Montenegro

Until 2000 and the replacement of Milošević, separatism in Montenegro was supported because of alleged justification that a democratic Montenegro was fighting against Milošević's authoritarianism and Bel-

¹¹ Regarding Kosovo, the rules defined by the EU itself in the decision of the Badinter Arbitration Commission ('Badinter Commission') were also violated, because based on Commission's decision; the SFR Yugoslavia fell apart along the existing republican borders.

grade's attempt to really put Montenegro under its full control. However, new Montenegrin nationalism began to flourish just after the replacement of Milošević and when the Democratic Opposition of Serbia came to power and many of Đukanović's associates and friends were members of it. Already, the Government of Montenegro announced a new platform for negotiations on the reorganization of the FRY on December 29th, 2000 in *Pobjeda* [Victory], newspaper published in Podgorica, where it first came up with the idea of two independent states. In other words, it was evident then that Milošević was just their justification and that the processes had a completely different basis, which pushed them to go further after 2000.¹² Đukanović, with the support of the USA and Brussels, continued his project on gaining statehood, more and more separating from Belgrade, which would eventually lead to a troubled independence referendum on May 21st, 2006, when Montenegro became independent. Along the way, some of the most important moments in which Brussels played a key role should be recalled.

In 2001, there were public and long-standing feuds between new federal authorities in Belgrade and Podgorica. There were also numerous attempts to open discussions between the DOS and the DPS at various NGO forums and to begin serious negotiations on the transformation of federal state. However, all these attempts were obstructed by Podgorica, which opted for bringing about independence and promotion of a policy of accomplished fact. At the end of the year, Kostunica, who was the president of FRY at that time, decided to deal with that situation and ask Podgorica to hold a referendum as soon as possible, where the citizens of Montenegro would first decide whether or not they wanted to live in community with Serbia at all.

This happened at a very unfavourable moment for Đukanović himself. Two factors affected his plans. In the domestic political life of Montenegro after the elections held in April of 2001, the DPS was forced to rule as a minority government being dependent on the support of Members of Parliament of Liberal Alliance of Montenegro. This eventually led to transient formation of the technical coalition LA and *Together for Yugoslavia* federal coalition, which jeopardized the survival of the DPS party in power for the first time. In addition to this unstable majority, the enormous popularity of Koštunica himself and the DOS in Montenegro endangered Đukanović's position, and this

¹² In a very useful memoir book, *Pravila ćutanja*, Narodna knjiga, Beograd, 2004, [*Rules of Silence*, Narodna knjiga, Belgrade, 2004], Momir Bulatović explained that the project of separating Montenegro from Serbia was elaborated and prepared by the US administration immediately after Dayton. During his first visit to the US after the situation that happened in Ohio, he was offered to be the leader and the one who would finish that. When he refused this, Milo Đukanović agreed to do that.

significantly strengthened the attractiveness of the survival of state union. The general impression was that there was not majority of Montenegrins that voted for secession, so, for example, Serbian Prime Minister Đinđić (who remained fairly neutral throughout the process) said on January 2nd, 2002 that he expected a referendum to be proposed soon, in which Đukanović's option would be lost.

Just then, the EU intervened in the whole process, preventing a referendum from being held at a time when Đukanović would surely lose it. In January 2002, Brussels began to directly mediate with the aim of preventing a referendum from being conducted and preserving a loose-knit community between Belgrade and Podgorica. This mediation eventually led to the Belgrade Agreement reached on March 14th, 2002 and the Constitutional Charter of the New Organization of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, which was adopted in January 2003. In this way, FR Yugoslavia formally ceased to exist as an independent, sovereign state and instead of it a looser state union was created which defined as its main goals the integration of the community with the European Union and the harmonization of its legislation with European standards¹³ in Article 3 of its Constitutional Charter. All this actually enabled Đukanović to consolidate and postpone the referendum issue for some other time.

During the process of negotiating on the Constitutional Charter, the "experts" of the Venice Commission were clearly on the side of the Montenegrin negotiators, advocating for a looser community.

The next step was the introduction of the so-called double track approach in 2003, which actually began treating the European integrations of Serbia and Montenegro as integrations of two separate and individual entities. After the unsuccessful negotiations between Belgrade and Podgorica on the harmonization of common customs policies towards third countries, Brussels de facto encouraged both sides to give up, and that each country should keep its customs system, which was actually welcomed through the double track of real institutional separation of the economic space of Serbia and Montenegro. So, the EU was behind the creation of Serbia and Montenegro, but instead of providing help to the community to consolidate its position and integrate according to European standards, the EU supported and legalized its actual separation.

Moreover, the acceptance of the double track was one of three key conditions for the publication of a positive feasibility study in spring 2005.¹⁴ The shocking second condition was the acceptance of the Agreement

¹³ See the text of a charter on page <http://www.arhiva.srbija.gov.rs/vesti/2003-02/05/333116.html>

¹⁴ <http://www.dw.de/studija-izvodljivosti/a-3863602>

on Constitutional Charter Amendment, which was signed only two years earlier. Namely, the EU put Serbia under pressure to accept Đukanović's fraud and refusal to adhere to agreement concluded in 2002 that the elections to the Union Parliament had to be held first and then to call a referendum. At the time, I was part of the state administration and had the opportunity to see the brutal stipulations of Brussels first hand, above all Štefan Lene who was an assistant of Javier Solana, High Representative for Foreign Affairs. Belgrade was then forced to give up elections that would surely consolidate the State Union and diminish Đukanović's legitimacy, and to agree to hold a referendum first.

All this resulted in a shameful role for the EU during the referendum next year when everything was done to separate Montenegro. From the behavior of mediator Miroslav Lajčák, through defining a small majority of 55% of voters, then through unilateral action of the referendum commission chairperson, also Slovak František Lipka and tolerating all electoral irregularities including announcing the alleged results five minutes after the referendum ended.¹⁵ Therefore, everything that Brussels did after 2000 in the case of Montenegro was contrary to their principles and led to further disintegration in the former Yugoslavia.

Kosmet

Talking about the normative framework of enlargement, I also mentioned the earlier practice of enlargement as the basis for Brussels' expected attitude towards the candidate. From this perspective, the case of Cyprus had to be a model for the treatment of Kosmet in Serbia's integration process. As is well known, the Nicosia regime has not exerted complete control over the northern part of Cyprus since 1974, which survives as the unrecognized Republic of Northern Cyprus. During the accession process, there were no double tracks in Cyprus, but the entire territory was treated as part of a sovereign and complete state. Also, there were no violently imposed and opened negotiations or insistence that the problem had to be "resolved" at any cost to speed up integrations. Moreover, when the peace initiative was rejected, Brussels simply registered the fact that the conflict could not be resolved because the Turks from the north of Cyprus did not want to return to the sovereign jurisdiction of the regime in Nicosia. He actually left the state of division on the ground and accepted all Cyprus into EU membership.¹⁶

¹⁵ This shameful role was played by Marko Blagojević from Belgrade who monitored the regularity of the referendum on behalf of the "objective" CFED (Center for Free Elections and Democracy)

¹⁶ For more information about the European integration of Cyprus take a look at St Phanie Laulh Shaelou, (2010).

In the case of Kosmet, which is in fact very similar to the Cyprus problem, Brussels did everything the other way around. Moreover, European officials were quite often prepared to claim that the case of Cyprus was the reason they did not want the same thing to happen again, and let Serbia to apply for membership with a part of its territory that it did not actually control.

The essential difference in a different treatment of these two very similar cases lies in different histories of their emergence and different position of the stakeholders in them and in front of interests of the most serious great powers. The partition of Cyprus was made by Turkey with great resentment of Western allies that even imposed an arms embargo on it. However, due to Turkey's great strategic importance for the USA and NATO foreign policy, this division was partially tolerated, but to the extent that it did not fill another ally with anger, i.e. Greece that is otherwise still allocating big money for international lobbying in favor of maintaining the territorial integrity of Cyprus and fighting for re-integration of the whole island under a single government.

However, regarding Kosmet, the partition of Serbia arose after the war that NATO and all most enormous Western powers jointly declared war on Serbia. The goal was its separation from the very beginning and Serbia had neither the means for lobbying nor any opportunity to keep that separation from happening. Even after 2000, Brussels fully put into operation these earlier developed policies, doing the opposite of what it did in the case of Cyprus or in all other cases in which it contributed to peacefully discuss minority issues through some form of autonomy in the domicile country as an indisputable international legal personality.

So, in fact, we witnessed that even after 2000, Kosovo received constant help to become a sovereign state and later the same protagonists argued that "the situation was different on the ground" and there was no way to go back to old things. It was evident that even the pogroms that happened on March 17th, 2004 and forcible evictions of Serbs were tolerated, with the destruction of hundreds of churches, religious sites, all traces of Serbian culture and even cemeteries.

Moreover, just after the pogrom, Brussels and most great European powers also participated in the revision of the normative framework previously defined by the thesis "standards before status". The issue was to achieve certain standards on the ground in different areas, such as return to the place people lived, house reconstruction, building institutions, etc., and only then to take status into consideration and start discussing it. However, the rhetoric had been changing rapidly since 2004 and already next year pressure was exerted to resolve the status issue as a matter of urgency. Already in November 2005, the Security

Council appointed Martti Ahtisaari as the official mediator in negotiations and the European Union sent a delegate Albert Roan as his deputy. Negotiations began in Vienna in February 2006, and after a farce that lasted until November of next year, negotiations were officially concluded without success. It was clear to all participants throughout the period that the West was merely seeking some form of independence with minority protection for Serbs in an independent Kosovo and that actually negotiations were not conducted. All Belgrade's proposals were rejected, so the Assembly of Kosovo declared independence on February 17th, 2008, which was immediately proclaimed by all considerable Western powers, who had previously pretended to be objective negotiators.

It should be said that participation in such negotiations in Vienna was imposed on Belgrade as another condition for the continuation of European integration, especially as part of the struggle to sign the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. Brussels continued to put Belgrade under pressure to slowly develop its policy of Kosovo according to Ahtisaari's plan and to actually accept independence when independence was proclaimed and encouraged by 22 countries out of 27 that were members of the EU. There followed the acceptance that the EU mission EULEX¹⁷ could come, so Brussels took charge of an operational action and control of Kosovo ousting the United Nations mission from power, in accordance with the Ahtisaari's plan. The Tadić administration also accepted the real integration of Serbs to the south of the Ibar River into the state system of an independent Kosovo, but it refused to do the same with the four northern municipalities in 2011. That was why a new administration was formed under the leadership of Nikolić and Vučić¹⁸ instead of the Tadić administration with the help of the West and Brussels. They also entered into an agreement on integrated border management that established a real border between Serbia and Kosovo and the Brussels agreement that opened the space for full reintegration of four municipalities into all systems of the political regime of Kosovo. This was a crucial condition for obtaining EU candidate status and for opening serious negotiations on membership with Brussels.

Germany as a key country in the EU (and others follow it), convincingly led the way in requirements that Belgrade and Priština sign Good Neighbor Agreement soon and there were more and more votes

¹⁷ European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (Translator's note)

¹⁸ On Election day on May 20th, 2012, the European Commission posted a message of congratulation to Nikolić when he won elections on its website, three hours before the polls closed, http://www.b92.net/info/izbori2012/vesti.php?yyyy=2012&mm=05&dd=20&nav_id=610973

explicitly stating that Serbia would have to formally declare the independence of Kosovo before it someday joined the EU at the end of the road.¹⁹

The Hague Tribunal

Until 2011 and Mladić's extradition, cooperation with The Hague Tribunal was the first and crucial condition for the continuation of Serbia's European integrations. Although this set of issues was considered by the provision on the rule of law, it was essentially a *par excellence* geopolitical condition. Brussels and the so-called international community accused the entire political and military leadership of Serbia, Republika Srpska and the Republic of Serbian Krajina in the 1990s, at a time when Serbs refused to accept the dictated geopolitical transposition of the Balkans and therefore came into direct conflict with the West. As a result, Brussels demanded that the new authorities had to be arrested and brought to an "independent and objective" tribunal in The Hague.

The same court acquitted Ramush Hradinaj and Naser Orić and no one has been convicted for war crimes after the Operation *Storm*. This kind of pressure and stipulation in the case of Croatia was incomparatively lighter and more reduced. Regarding the case of Bobetko, they let the accused former Chief of the General Staff of the Croatian Army die slowly in Zagreb and Croatia did not bear any consequences for not extraditing him. Only when it comes to the case of Gotovina were there tremendous pressures and conditions, but in the end the whole process was completed without an appropriate sentence and Croatia became a member of the European Union without major problems.

However, talking about Serbia, The Hague has always been emphasized as the first and foremost condition, despite all other major economic and political problems in the country. This clearly has defined Brussels' priority in relations with Serbia: ending the war where Serbia will accept defeat and leaders from the 1990s will be punished. A positive feasibility study was conducted primarily because of a series of extraditions of military and police chiefs demanded by Koštunica's cabinet in early 2005. The EU candidate status was obtained several months after Mladić was extradited for the last time.

However, now it is indicated that further conditions of integration will be the introduction of consequences of judgments (and such interpretation of recent history) into school textbooks. For instance, Serbian pupils would be taught about the genocide that had occurred in Srebrenica

¹⁹ We also remembered the famous performance of German Ambassador Cobel, who publicly warned Serbia in 2006 that if it did not recognize Kosovo, it could lose, for example, Vojvodina. Western officials have never used such 'warnings' in any other country.

in 1995 in their textbooks, which would imply that children would be taught according to the western version of what happened in the former Yugoslavia.²⁰ I am not familiar with the case that during the forty years of enlargement practice, Brussels has conditioned the entry of any country by changing its school curricula and revising textbooks.

Change of Consciousness

Closely related to the previous topic is already famous and often repeated German condition as the most dominant force in the Union about the so-called change of consciousness in Serbia. At a NATO conference in 2010, when Wolfram Mass, a German ambassador of that time, came to Belgrade, he uttered the following words: "I have to criticize the authorities in Serbia for using terms such as 'NATO bombing' themselves!" Imagine you were walking down Knez Miloš Street and your child asked you, "Dad, who did this?" You would answer: "NATO"! So, what do you expect that kid to think about NATO? In contrast, as a young man in Germany, I watched the ruins of my city – but I did not hate the one who did it because there were those who could tell me why it was done."

Mr. Mass then demanded that the Serbian leadership should make its citizens change their consciousness and after that they would accept the illegal bombing of Serbia in 1999 as something that was done in our interest. He, therefore, equated Milošević's behavior with Hitler's in Germany and demanded that Serbia should be internalized and adopted as part of collective memory. In early 2012, German parliamentarians requested that the Serbian authorities also help and make the Serbs from Kosovo change their consciousness.

As in the previous paragraph, this is about accepting defeat and internalizing the dictate of the victors as part of their altered consciousness. It is easy to recognize the recurrence of the legacy of frustration over the defeat of Germany in the two world wars in all these things. All this again has nothing to do with the current practice of EU enlargement and the Copenhagen criteria.

The Venice Commission

The Venice Commission during two important processes in 2006 conducted extremely biased and at least strangely and unusually. The

²⁰ Minister Rasim Ljajić spoke about that openly when Gotovina and Markač gained their acquittal on November 16th, 2012. He resignedly said that the cooperation with The Hague would be reduced to the technical level and that all programs being discussed, such as, for example, introduction of judgments in textbooks would be stopped.

Venice Commission is the Council of Europe's advisory body on constitutional matters which – formally speaking – is not really part of the structure of the European Union. However, while the referendum in Montenegro was being organized and during the debates that developed regarding the adoption of the Mitrovdan Constitution of Serbia, it closely cooperated with the bodies of the Union, which politically addressed these processes in accordance with the “legal” recommendations and opinions of the Venice Commission. Its opinion about the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia adopted in 2006 remained a kind of enduring legacy and based on this, the Brussels' authorities, have sought to amend it since its adoption.

During the organization of the referendum, the Venice Commission and Brussels came up with an odd number of 55% of people who went to the polls as supposedly sufficient majority to legitimately determine whether Montenegro was ready for independence. At the same time, Montenegrin citizens that lived in Serbia did not have the right to vote.

Even after this process of territorial shrinkage of the state, which we mentioned in the first part of this text, the Venetians continued to interfere in the organization of Serbia. The opinion, expressed in session held on 17th and 18th March 2007 and which Brussels used as a landmark for future revision of the constitution, was crammed with extremely unexpected and malicious remarks affecting the territorial and institutional organization of the state, as well as the identity of the state and Serbian people as the majority. So, for instance in the item 12 of this opinion, the Commission criticized Article 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, which sets out that the Serbian language and Cyrillic script shall be officially in use in the Republic of Serbia. Allegedly, with such a provision and failure to take measures to introduce the Latin alphabet in official use, there is a decreased protection of linguistic rights of minorities in Serbia.²¹

This statement, as well as other remarks (e.g. regarding autonomy), was very politicized, which was well assessed in expert texts written by Vladan Kutlešić²² and Slobodan Antonić²³, among others. I would not repeat their arguments here, so the reader can take a look at these texts himself/herself (as well as the Opinion itself) and see how malicious comments and unfounded remarks that serve to further condition Serbia were. It is particularly interesting to set this opinion within a

²¹ See *Opinion of the Venice Commission on the Constitution of Serbia* no. 405/2006, on website http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:l8mZm-WHhxJcJ:www.coe.org.rs/REPOSITORY/234_misljenje_o_ustavu_srbije_mart_07.doc+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk

²² Kutlešić, (2007).

²³ Antonić, (2007).

comparative framework. Kutlešić observes: "And in this regard, it is interesting that, as far as constitutions are concerned, the Commission has discussed the constitutions of the following countries: Georgia, Montenegro, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Armenia, Chechnya, Liechtenstein, Azerbaijan, Romania, Croatia, Slovenia, Mozambique, Belarus, Republika Srpska and Serbia. The above mentioned list is interesting for two reasons; firstly, because during that period of time, the other, at least formally similar, states were adopting or amending the Constitution: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Russia and their constitutions were not subject to consideration for this commission. Secondly, and perhaps more important, is that in the same period, ten other so-called old European democracies adopted their new constitutions (Switzerland 1999, Finland 1999, Greece 2001 and the Netherlands 2004) or amended the existing ones (e.g. Italy several times until 2002, Belgium and Ireland several times until 2004 and France 2005) and that their constitutions also were not subject to the assessment of this Commission."²⁴

We can notice that the constitutions of only three countries that became members of the EU were analyzed and discussed by the Venice Commission, and that giving opinions on the constitutions of existing EU member states, as well as those candidates that were not suitable for evaluation because of the geopolitical interests of the largest Western powers, was avoided, so we will talk about that in the following text.

Readmission of Romani people

In 2005, at a time when the administration was struggling to get a positive feasibility study, one of the biggest obstacles was the issue of the readmission of Romani people. Unlike The Hague's condition, which dominated through the media, negotiations on this issue were conducted far from the public. Very little was noted down and the author of this text was not able to reach the formal or informal number of people that Serbia had to accept and provide social care to make this step in European integration. From direct conversations led with the people who ran the Office of Minority Affairs in the administration at the time, I learned that Brussels' pressures were brutal and that speculations give grounds for suspicion that Brussels sought the readmission of not only Romani people from Serbia, but for a number of people that did not have any Serbian documents.

²⁴ Kutlešić, *ibid.*

Generally speaking, although FR Yugoslavia adopted a very liberal Minority Law immediately after the change of the regime on October 5th and although Serbia today has one of the “most progressive” minority policies in Europe that includes enormous rights for national councils, education in minority languages, etc., this country suffers pressures all the time as if it really jeopardizes certain minorities. The European Parliament has repeatedly proposed and adopted resolutions on alleged jeopardy/deprivation of minority rights in Serbia, or criticized Serbia’s inadequate attitude to the minority issue,²⁵ and we also saw from the remarks of the Venice Commission that it was maliciously seeking for any reason to reprimand and warn Serbia against minority rights policies.

At the same time, Bulgaria, for instance, did not recognize national minorities at all, Croatia became a full member despite refusing to address the issue of occupancy rights and return of the Serbs, and ethnic Serbs in a number of neighboring EU non-member countries could not receive even a portion of their minority rights in Serbia. The cases of the Baltic republics, which since 1990 have systematically violated and denied any human and ethnic rights, above all the Russian minority, but also all other minorities living on the territory of those states best explain the geopolitically inspired flexibility of Brussels. They have been living without citizenship, regular passports, legal right to vote in elections and preservation of their ethnic and national identity for more than two decades. All this has never been condemned by Brussels and ten years ago these countries were admitted to membership despite the radical discrimination against a large number of their citizens.²⁶

6. Controversial Privatization

In mid-June 2011, the Brussels administration sent a letter to the Government of Serbia requesting an examination of more than twenty privatizations carried out in Serbia since 2000. In the coming months, twenty-four “disputable privatizations” crystallized, and their questioning and further resolution was requested from the next two governments in Serbia as well.²⁷

Privatization has been associated with some controversy in almost all Eastern European countries, but I am not familiar with an example

²⁵ For example, 12th item of the resolution of EP about Serbia of March 29th, 2012, See: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/dsee/dv/0704_03/0704_03en.pdf

²⁶ See in detail in „Доклад о положении русских в Латвии и о мерах, необходимых для улучшения их положения, (2012): Institute of European Studies, Riga. http://www.esinstitute.org/files/ethnic_minority_russian.pdf

²⁷ See the list on the website <http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=1162898>

when Brussels, as a condition for further achievement of integration, called for a reconsideration of controversial privatization. The aim was to strengthen the private sector and to bring a market economy into operation as soon as possible everywhere and any backward movement, as a rule, could only slow down this process. In any case, the very selective choice of controversial privatizations was noticed. In only one case (Sartid), was a foreign company involved. In other cases, the potential culprits (besides members of the administration) are big Serbian tycoons. At the same time, potentially controversial privatizations whose protagonists were, e.g. Croatian and Slovenian companies were not included. For example, everybody knows about a suspicious transaction from 2005 when Agrokor bought two-thirds of the ownership of Dijamant Oil Factory²⁸ under suspicious circumstances. However, if one knows that the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has invested its capital in Agrokor several times, then it becomes clear why Brussels' administration overlooks the illegalities of this company and puts Serbian tycoons under enormous pressure.

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We have shown several prominent examples so far and the practice of conditioning Serbia's European integration is fundamentally and substantially different from the norms and practices of conditioning other candidates in the last thirty years. However, it should be added that, at the same time, Brussels and the European institutions have never seriously insisted on real Copenhagen criteria and fulfilling aspirations that would make Serbia a serious liberal democracy with a sustainable market economy. Here are just a few of these segments:

1. The Real Situation of Democratic Institutions

Since Đinđić's government, then Koštunica's and then under the last government of Vučić, everyone tolerated manipulation in parliament, artificial comprising of majority, brutal political elimination of the opposition and various other undemocratic methods of government as long as they were ready to carry out mainly geopolitical and geo-economic goals of Western powers. This has created a complete culture of political violence, instability and distrust of democratic institutions, including the judiciary.

²⁸ The prosecution and police started this story of suspicious trade stock outside the stock market several times, but the investigation has never ended. See <http://www.kurir-info.rs/mucka-clanak-23847>

2. Sustainability of Economic Development

Brussels, along with international financial institutions, imposed completely wrong principles regarding the way economy operated, demanding an immediate reduction in customs in a country that was brutally bombed only a year earlier and whose industry was devastated. In any case, as in a number of other countries, the more Serbia progressed in European integration, the higher its public debt was and the economy was even worse.

3. Media Freedom, Pluralism and Objectivity

For more than a decade, Brussels has tolerated a vague and non-transparent ownership structure in the Serbian media, intervening to defend its protégés despite their lack of objectivity and debt problems, etc. Only when the largest geopolitical goals were achieved did Brussels' institutions begin to address the problems of ownership structure, non-transparency, etc. And the latest case of a recent intervention by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the director of the EU office in Belgrade regarding freedom of the media in jeopardy in May 2014 happened after two years of completely ignoring utterly disgraceful behavior of tabloids that was under strict control of Serbia's most powerful politician. The first advertising of Brussels' institutions occurred only when he became disobedient to certain issues and when this entire situation was used as a kind of political pressure on him, and we cannot even consider this a real struggle for media freedom and pluralism in Serbia.

4. Creating a Sustainable and Harmonized Party System with a Normal Right Wing

Since the beginning of the Serbian transition, the West has had its political favorites here, usually Radical Parties or the moderate left-wing parties, very hostile towards the rule of law, institutions and everything that provides the basis for community stability and liberal democracy. The West did not allow serious authentic right-wing parties to form here, but it artificially pushed its protégés like G17 Plus, later the URS into that space. Nikolić and Vučić were accepted into the political mainstream only when they adopted the LDP program, namely the program of radical left-wing party. The consequences of this kind of policy led to a ruined party system, political instability, a lack of continuity in the state administration and a generally very poor state of administration and political life.

Perhaps the best example is Brussels' attitude towards Malović's criminal justice reform. Quite contrary to the Constitution, the minister pushed through a set of amendments to the law that allowed dismissal of all judges and then their re-election according to extremely problematic and non-transparent criteria in 2009. For the first couple of years, the appeals of community of experts and the Judges' Association of Serbia did not produce any desired results. The impression was that even this would have happened if Tadić wanted to cooperate in other geopolitical issues, but this problem was used to overthrow Tadić afterwards when he rejected a geopolitical set of conditions mainly related to the surrender of Northern Kosmet in 2011. While they could hardly vehemently object to the entire reform process in 2010, European officials intensified publicity and criticism against the Serbian administration's attitude towards the judiciary at the end of 2011 and at the beginning of the following year.

Conclusion

In addition to the standard conditions, Serbia faced with a great number of conditions that were not imposed on other candidates. Knowing the history and case of Turkey's enlargement, for example, the logical conclusion is that geopolitics in the process of Serbia's European integration is much more important than the current normative and inherited expansion practices and that this thesis cannot simply be rejected by the standard claim that the EU has raised the criteria and one should make a great effort to get onto the first step on the ladder after 2004.²⁹

Serbia is treated as a defeated adversary and the "European" framework is used to finish the geopolitical reorganization of the space that Serbia resisted in the 1990s. However, various elements that lead to the undermining of the identity of majority of people and state are also added to this.

The process of the European integration of Serbia is undoubtedly taking place as a process of permanently setting new atypical conditions leading to further destabilization and weakening of the country, instead of strengthening it in accordance with the Copenhagen criteria. The best example is today's absolutely inefficient and incompetent administration, which was brought to power and supported only because it accepted the Brussels' Agreement.

The goal is obviously to keep us in the process as long as new conditions are constantly being imposed.

²⁹ Recent events that occurred in Ukraine and the way how Ukraine entered into a contract with the EU on June 27, 2014 extraordinarily show the revived geopolitical background of EU expansion policy.

However, there are logically two issues that cannot be heard in parliament or in relevant debates of our political elite:

1. Is it even a goal of the great Western countries to ever allow Serbia to become a member of the EU?

2. What are the practical consequences of a negative response to defining Serbia's foreign policy priorities.

Translated from Serbian by
Jovana Marinković

RIGHT REVEREND IRINEJ, PHD, BISHOP OF BAČKA

THE ISSUE OF KOSOVO-METOHIJA –
AN ESSENTIAL ISSUE OF SERBDOM TODAY³⁰

Honourable President of Matica srpska,
Respected representatives of the State Leadership of Serbia,
Esteemed Members of the Academy, Professors and all other Participants in this Forum,

Dear Members, Associates and Friends of Matica srpska,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Brothers and Sisters!

I have, over the most recent period – forgive me for using the personal pronoun ‘I’ at the very opening of this brief discourse – found myself in a situation to respond to some views and even attacks on the Serbian Orthodox Church concerning its attitude to the hurtful wound of Kosovo and Metohija. Naturally enough, and like here today, I said what I felt and thought, on my own behalf, with no instructions and without any official backup from the Church; but I was aware of the fact which I now wish to emphasize – that, whenever someone from our Church ranks, ranging from some parochial priests to the Patriarch Himself, speaks on this issue, there will always exist an internal accord, a spontaneous and pre-vouched solidarity and unanimity in regard to what is of major importance. There may occur some differences and nuances in details and marginal issues, but none in what is of essential significance. Why do I put emphasis on that? Because I wish to convey to you my modest personal conviction that the same is going to happen in this all-national/all-Serbian dialogue taking place in various modes,

³⁰ The address by Right Reverend Bishop Irinej was delivered at the Opening Session of the Round Table titled *Kosovo and Metohija: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (*Kosovo i Metohija – juče, danas, sutra*), held at Matica srpska on November 17, 2017. Nine contributions (out of 21 published in the ensuing Proceedings) have been selected for this issue of the *Literary Links of Matica srpska*. – *Translator's note*.

institutionally and non-institutionally, yet incessantly – as Mr. President of Matica has rightfully stressed – ever since the Battle of Kosovo until this day, and which will proceed for as long as the Serbian people and Serbian state/states exist. That is our everlasting subject, and not only an issue of geography, politics, international relations or the like. Therefore, like the believers of our Church – and they are the vast majority of our people – who basically have the same feeling for this problem, I believe that our real, and not self-proclaimed, spiritual, intellectual, scientific, art-related and cultural elite will ultimately crystallize an unambiguous if not unanimous view that will mirror an all-embracing feeling and attitude of all Serbian people, and not only the citizens of Serbia; for, the dialogue concerns all Serbs, including even those who live in New Zealand. Not one Serb can be deprived of the right to have a view on the status of Kosovo and Metohija.

Since the time limits, set justifiably, oblige me not to be too exhaustive, I wish to mention – immodestly perhaps – an autobiographical fact: it was in Metohija that I, as a young monk, was given my first place of service. Ever since and to this day, Kosovo and Metohija have been one of the crucial topics of my own life and contemplation. (I would point out that in those days I went across half of Metohija on foot, for late Bishop Pavle, our Patriarch at a later period, did not allow us, the monks, to accept the offers of those who stopped and wanted to give us a lift. He had his ascetic reasons for that. He would say: Just on foot, praying to God while you walk!) The issue of Kosovo and Metohija, an essential issue of Serbdom nowadays, should be considered in the key framework set up by Mr. President of Matica, with our hope relying on the future, on Our Lord above all. It has a variety of dimensions. I shall restrict myself only to those few which I have found inadequately present in our public discourse, including the ‘internal’ dialogue which – in one way or another, with or without an initiative coming from the State – is underway and is to remain so.

I would begin with the issue of the name. We lightly accepted this part of our fatherland to be named *Kosovo i Metohija* [‘Kosovo and Metohija’ – Translator’s italic.], for the two are actually its main constituent parts. However, in the good Soviet-like manner which was also the manner of our Communists – provided the possessive adjective *our* and the noun *communist* can be taken as related coherently and in terms of sense – the two words were soon blended into the awkward abbreviation *Kosmet*, which was for a long, long time the prevailing term for that district that was within a short time thereafter renamed a Province. In our media, the term *Kosmet* was mostly in use, a small number of people referred to it as *Kosovo*, and almost nobody used the full name of *Kosovo i Metohija*. The partial return to the full name over the past

several years is a significant step toward rectifying this mindlessness of ours. For, those who changed the historic, age-long names and introduced new ones did not do that by chance but with a plan, reckoning with the goal to be reached, one they have achieved to a great degree.

I have had an opportunity to see, in a book, a large number of old maps of that Serbian land, *our* land. There is not a single old Austrian or other map whereon the area – then still within the Ottoman Empire – is named otherwise but *Stara Srbija* (*Old Serbia*). As a matter of fact, that was the name which at that time prevailed among the Serbs, if it was not the only one used. If the name had survived, the idea about this part of our country would have had to be different in the minds of those who nowadays aspire to decide upon its future alone, without including us. What is more, I am convinced that most of those who make decisions instead of us, that is, against us, do not even know the exact location of the area, let alone understand the current problems concerning it. It is not improbable that most of them think that it is an Albanian territory meanwhile occupied by the Serbs. In a similar way, foreigners interpret the issues related to Bosnia-Herzegovina and the present-day Croatia. Yet if they had ever faced the fact that there is no Serb who calls the area otherwise but *Stara Srbija*, they would have had to draw some other conclusion, may it be the minutest one.

The game of names has not been applied to the territory of Kosovo and Metohija only. It used to be a matter of general politics, aimed at the weakening of the Serbs' consciousness about the integrity of their country and their nation. I shall also refer to the word *Sandžak* [Turkish *sancak*, sanjak/sub-province – Translator's note]. What does *Sandžak* mean? Nothing at all. In the times of Turkish rule, in the official Turkish administration system, the area of Raška fell within the Sanjak of Novi Pazar, one of the many sanjaks (administrative districts) in the Ottoman Empire. We have the same example here, locally: What does *Vojvodina* mean? The same as *Sandžak*, that is, nothing. *Vojvodina*, as *Vojvodina* never existed in Austria wherein it was created, *in abstracto*. What used to exist was *Srpska Vojvodina* ['Serbian Duchy' – Translator's note.], a Serbian entity within the Austrian and, later, Austro-Hungarian state. Since the Serbian determiner was erased, certainly not by chance, we may wonder: Is this about the Duchy of Liechtenstein, or Monaco, or a duchy in Poland, or what the term 'duchy' is supposed to mean if there is no duke and no geographical definition? That is nonsense, as it would also be if we *named* a country merely by a term such as kingdom, republic, federation, emirate – with no definition of its real subjectivity. Consequently, there are only concrete and real kingdoms (Great Britain, for instance), republics (e.g. Serbia), federations (Russian Federation), emirates (United Arab Emirates) etc. Our real, and not self-proclaimed,

elite should – in my opinion – gradually and side by side with the name *Kosovo i Metohija* (which we must not reduce to just *Kosovo*, or, worse, *Kosmet*) – launch and reintroduce the term *Stara Srbija* in the public discourse. The idea may to some appear to be an unimportant detail, a word play without any practical value. I do not believe so: experiments with names and terms have so far proved to be of significance, especially in propaganda wars waged before, and those underway.

The other point I wish to stress is that our discourse about Old Serbia – apart from various dimensions of the painful and thorny problem we are obliged to cope with – contains many precious cognitions and views, but it seems to me that there is an insufficiency of the feeling for the votive and identity-related character of Kosovo and Metohija. Today, many speak about the Myth of Kosovo rather than about the Vow of Kosovo. Ultimately, I am personally not bothered by the term *myth*. Our true intellectuals know that ‘myth’ is not a disparaging/pejorative word suggestive of something dubious, legend-involving or fabled; actually, the word means the same as the Vow. After all, as early as in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, *myth* is the same as the *logos*. Logos, however, contains sense in itself, it is not sheer jabber. Yet our traditional word is *Zavet* (‘Vow’): it is so close and intimate, bears a most profound inner note, incites vibration in our souls and hearts. The votive thought, it seems to me, is not emphasized enough among us, although we should think about the fact that it is this very word which is the main content and main value of that sacred-to-us territory.

It [the territory] cannot be lost if we do not do everything to lose it. It cannot be taken away from us through temporary occupation, however long-lasting it may be, or through the usurpatory rule of the revolting Arbanasi. Permanently, it can only be alienated by our acceptance of the hard-hearted dictate from abroad. (By the way, here is another opportunity to remind ourselves of the propaganda war waged by names and ethnonyms: Let us think about the road which led us from the *Arbanasi* and the *Arnauti*, via the *Šiptari*, all the way to the *Albanci*/Albanians who actually never call themselves the Albanians but only the *Šiptari* [Albanian *Shqiptarë* – Translator’s note.]). The votive character of that land can be realized at first sight though: On that small territory, there are more than a thousand and five hundred monasteries, churches and sites of onetime churches, as well as other holy places and cultural monuments. What is more, there are solely Serbian sacred sites and Serbian monuments; there are no Arbanasi ones. And the Muslim houses of worship and monuments one finds there – they are Turkish and not Arbanasi ones, unless we proclaim the rural tower houses of the beys as supreme achievements of art and, generally, of the creative spirit. The spiritual foundations of all events

in the history of one nation are those which imbue these events with sense and enable them not to fall into oblivion but to be experienced as a holy obligation for the future. And without the faithfulness to the Vow which has guided us through history and led us to the present day – there will be no future awaiting us.

The third element I wish to mention now and here, is the defeatism, utter listlessness and apathy of the majority of our public (the Russians have an appropriate expression for it – *porazhenchestvo*). Our voluntary *porazhentsi* advocate a seemingly pragmatic yet completely irresponsible, suicidal position. They say: Kosovo has been lost; here, for two decades now we have not had the presence of our state there; Resolution 1244 of the UN does not mean anything for us; it would be best for us to get rid of the dead weight... All of us present here have heard and read such messages many times. But they are, I would say, an even greater failure (the word *greh* ['sin'] in its original sense means *promašaj* ['failure']) than the previously mentioned theses. Namely, in terms of the so-called *Realpolitik*, a situation on the ground – even when it lasts not for twenty years but for two centuries or two millennia – does not determine its outcome. "*Boj ne bije svijetlo oružje već boj bije srce u junaka.*" [*"A battle's fought not by weapons cold but by the hearts of warriors bold."*]³¹

I shall refer to the generally known example of the Jewish people. Almost two thousand years ago, Jerusalem and its temple, the spiritual centre and the pivot of the nation, were shattered, the name of Jerusalem was forbidden and the Roman city of Aelia Capitolina was established upon its ruins. No Jew had the right to settle in the city – Jewish people were displaced around all the provinces of the Kingdom. What hope could they hold that Jerusalem could one day become what it used to be – their capital and the centre of their historic identity and life? And yet, that hope came true nearly two thousand years later, but owing to their practice in the just-described circumstances to greet each other – each year during the feast of Pascha – with the words: "Next year in Jerusalem!" Why cannot we say once at least – "Next year in Prizren, next year in Peć"? Instead of some people among us declaring that the "dead weight" should be written off – and those are as a rule people whose feet have never trodden the soil of Kosovo and Metohija, or, if otherwise, the experience never affected them – why could we not learn something from the millennia-long experience of a great historic nation?

Here is another, more recent example: Cyprus. Cyprus has been through worse than we have at Kosovo-Metohija, and it was owing to

³¹ Or, literally: "Battles are waged not by flashing arms but by the heroes' hearts." The quotation is taken from *The Mountain Wreath*, an epic poem by the great Serbian poet Petar II Petrović Njegoš (1813-51), Prince-Bishop of Montenegro (r. from 1830). – *Translator's note.*

the same major powers which made us experience what we have been through. Had Turkey occupied the whole of Cyprus, the result would have been the same, for Turkey is more important to the great powers of the West than 'a' Cyprus or even the whole of Greece. Somewhat less than one half of the island was desolated to such an extent that just one or two years later there were hardly any vestiges to testify to the millennia of the Greek population on the island. The historic monastery dedicated to the Holy Apostle Barnabas, the founding father of the Church in Cyprus, as well as many churches, have been either torn down, or desecrated, or converted to mosques and other kinds of buildings. The sacred and art treasures are being sold by the Turks worldwide; well-off Greek Cypriots then go around to buy these, if and when they detect the items, and to bring them back to Cyprus. However, never have I heard a single person, absolutely anyone – and I have a lot of friends there and rather often pay either private or official visits – say: "Let us forget! Let the Turks hold one half of the island, and let us keep this other half, and we shall so keep going." Never have I heard anyone talking about "Turkish Cyprus", not even about a 'Turkish part of Cyprus'. The one and only expression Greek Cypriots use is *catechoumena* [Greek *κατεχόμενα* – Translator's note.], which means 'occupied territory'. And what is the manner of our speech? The phrase "Kosovo is Serbia" has been replaced by the shameful phrase "Serbia and Kosovo". In the media, we can find titles, the addressing of Thaçi, Haradinaj and other leaders of the criminal clans as if they were normal statesmen and natural partners for talks. I am grateful to the two gentlemen present here, Mr. Nikola Selaković and Mr. Marko Djurić, for not succumbing to the sin/failure but resisting actively, like all conscious and conscientious Serbs.

In the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the position of the Serbian people was not splendid at all; yet owing to the enormous and all-embracing spiritual effort of the Serbian Church and her people, including – naturally enough – the endeavours of the Matica srpska, they survived and have outlived the Dual Monarchy. As a result, the sub-regions of Srem, Banat and Bačka are integrated in Serbia as her parts. To put it briefly, Kosovo and Metohija are sacred lands to us, just as Palestine is sacred land to both the Jews, and the Christians and the Muslims — due to their sacred sites. Peć or Prizren could likewise – in an art discourse or flexible solemn speeches – be designated as 'Serbian Jerusalem' or 'Serbian Constantinople', just as the locution *Srpska Atina* ('Serbian Athens') has become an appealing literary name of Novi Sad, as has *Srpski Sion* ('Serbian Zion') been used for Sremski Karlovci. Such benign yet inspiring names would contribute to the sense of historical continuity and be helpful in the efforts to maintain and foster remembrance, historical memory and responsibility for the present time and the future.

Hope is said to die last. I think that hope *never* dies. It is only in the future Kingdom of God that faith and hope, ever-effectual in history, will blend into one and, ultimately, stream together into the eternal love. We must not give up either the hope or the stance that the Vow of Kosovo is nothing else but a historical and spiritual application of the New Testament's idea on our nation, its essence and its historical destiny. In spite of all, we are — thank God — neither in the position of the Jews in the aftermath of the Roman seizure of Jerusalem and the demolition of Jerusalem's temple, nor in the position of our brothers the Greek Cypriots following the Turkish invasion in the 1970's, nor in the position of the Kurds and others. Contrariwise: we are not totally alone. It is solely our former political 'elite' that is blameworthy for the fact that the international debate about the issue of Kosovo and Metohija is no longer conducted at the [U.N.] Security Council but — what a paradox! — among those who planned, organized and carried out the occupation of our votive land. They are supposed to help us solve the problem!? Well, the problem is — from their point of view — solved definitely! I am not saying this in the capacity of a politician, for I am not one, or a bishop, even when in my life I speak in terms of pure politics or terminology; my stance is always — to the extent of my abilities — that of historiosophy, theology and teleology, which I find to be more profound, more decisive and more durable than any geopolitical analyses and conclusions.

That is to say: We are facing great, powerful countries and military alliances which think that Kosovo and Metohija, or Old Serbia, should be torn away from Serbia for ever. At the same time, there are other major powers which are highly influential and without which no decision of the kind can be made, and those are Russia and China, the countries which take a totally opposite stance and which have thus far successfully been preventing NATO's *Drang nach Osten* in general and the takeover of our southern province in particular. Our domicile defeatists, the agents of the spirit of *porazhenchestvo*, claim that "the hour has come" to say: "Here you are, friends and neighbours *Šiptari*, alias *Arnauti* and, of course, Albanians, take as a gift what has never been yours!" Who has granted them, or us, the right to do so? If we did do so, it would not only be a voluntary and lasting loss of Kosovo and Metohija, but also a gradual suicidal loss of Serbia, with unforeseeable consequences for Serbdom on the whole. In all probability, we would over time become a kind of 'modern' European nomads/stateless people. May that not happen in our thoughts, let alone in reality!

BOGOLJUB ŠIJAKOVIĆ

KOSOVO AND METOHIJA: BETWEEN BRUTAL REALITY AND NORMATIVE SACREDNESS

(“Oh, Kosovo, the awesome Judgment Home”,
Njegoš, *The Mountain Wreath*, 987)¹

To the Serbian people and the state of Serbia, the status of Kosovo and Metohija is a question of elementary identity and integrity: of *identity* – in the sense of Serbian self-understanding being determined by the normative sphere within which the Vow of Kosovo and Vidovdan ethics² certainly fall; of *integrity* – not only in the sense of territorial integrity and sovereignty, but also integrity as the capacity for self-preservation. That is why Kosovo is a vital issue of the Serbian state and national organism, or, the organic issue of the Serbian state and national vitality. When facing the problem of Kosovo, we are – as a nation and a state – split up between the *brutal reality* (military capture of Kosovo and Metohija by NATO, allied with the revolting Albanians in this province of Serbia) and *normative sacredness* (the significance of Kosovo in the church-national tradition). This complexity must be taken into account so as to grasp the problem and formulate an answer, and not in order to – under the pressure of reality – work on settling the Kosovo problem in the ‘now or never’ style (historical phenomena are

¹ The quotation/motto is taken from *The Mountain Wreath* [*Gorski vijenac*], epic poem by the great Serbian poet Petar II Petrović Njegoš (1813-51), Prince-Bishop of Montenegro (r. from 1830). The original line reads: “O Kosovo, grdno sudilište”. – *Translator’s note*.

² For better understanding of the notions ‘Vow of Kosovo’ and ‘Vidovdan ethics’ see the previous contributions by Miloš Kovačević, Ivan Negrišorac and Djordjo Sladoje with corresponding footnotes. – *Translator’s note*.

characterized by long duration!) or in order to – under the pressure of normativity – play the ‘all or nothing’ move (gambling with destiny is not a sign of sobriety). A wise answer (and it does not exclude “emotions”, for these have their rational explanation) should be sought in tackling all of the structural elements of this complicated problem. The problem shall not be solved by an “agreement between the Serbs and the Albanians”, for the stronghold of Kosmet’s Albanians has been designed and reinforced by Washington [D.C.], London, Brussels. I promptly admit: it is much easier to disqualify a proposal than say what to do, for the simple reason that many elements needed in decision-making are beyond our control. However, when you do not know what *has* to be done, it is highly important to know what you should *not* do.

The Complex Reality

The currently complex historical reality of Kosovo and Metohija poses a singular and extremely intricate problem for the Serbian people and the state of Serbia. “Singular” means that the problem is unique and monolithic, so that it often appears to us that it is unsolvable. “Intricate” means that it consists of a large number of significant special issues, each of which further has a multitude of special points. In order to tackle such an intricate problem, we have to break it down structurally and then solve what is solvable under the given circumstances. The structural points of the Kosmet problem should be the subject matter of not only political but also of detailed technical analysis which can lead to the formulation of *our* view of the so-called “comprehensive normalization of relations” we are currently being forced into. Namely, the aspect of importance implies the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of the state of Serbia guaranteed by the UN Security Council Resolution 1244. Whatever the “factual state of affairs” may be, this legal fact is of capital value and it should be activated in every way. It is completely legitimate to refer to the fact that the historical, cultural and religious self-consciousness of the Serbian people (the Serbian identity) is to a considerable degree based upon Kosovo as its landmark. In Kosovo and Metohija there is the exceptionally important and open issue of the Church – in the sense of the Serbian and the world’s cultural/historical heritage and in terms of the property of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Thereby, one should not incautiously suggest any models (including that of the monastic community on Athos, the Holy Mountain); what is more, that should not be suggested by a minister of foreign affairs, but we should search for an all-embracing solution (of course, one presuming full security). Kosovo and Metohija is an extremely serious and realistic issue – in terms of the military and security. Referring

thereto, we should contain any effort at the military strengthening of the Albanians in KosMet, demanding the related guarantees from international institutions. Any move by the Serbian side which could strengthen the Albanian factor in the region would be unwise, for that factor has unambiguously demonstrated hostility toward us. It is impossible to skirt the numerous issues of economy in Kosovo and Metohija: the usurped property (of private persons, the Church and the State), investments and credit/loan arrangements made by Serbia, energy, natural and other resources, trade, communications... As a Serbian and international problem, 'Kosovo' is also a complex issue of jurisprudence, and there are countless unsolved legal issues to the detriment of the Serbs (ranging from usurpation of all kinds of property to bare lives). Not only because the ethical aspects of the people's rights are undeniable, but also the ancestral/traditional ones: for, Kosovo is seen as a moral issue by the Serbs. After all, it is a matter of elementary civilizational criteria – not to accept violence as superior to law and justice. All of that stands before us as a question of transgenerational responsibility, the historic responsibility before the past and the future. Thus, the demand for a "comprehensive normalization of relations" should comprehend these and many other issues, while it makes no sense to talk about "normalization" if the law has been suspended and advantage given to force.

The Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija should build a legitimate self-governing form (it may be the "Community of Serb Municipalities") and legalize their authentic interests similar to those of the Albanian separatists, who put their interests into practice relying on foreign backup; that is something we should do at a suitable moment. Such an endeavour takes determination, readiness and persistence – the very qualities necessary for a man who defends his life and the lives of his family and neighbours, who defends freedom and dignity, that is, the ideals the realization of which does not require any additional legitimacy. Where the struggle for freedom (recognition, unification) awaits people, no special justification and explanation is needed.

'Normalization' as Acceptance of Abnormal Circumstances

The frame of reference for our discourse and thoughts related to the subject of Kosovo and Metohija includes one particular element of the pressure exerted upon us: the stance of the Euro-Atlantic power structures that Serbia's membership in the European Union (which is officially Serbia's priority in the country's foreign policy) has been conditioned by a "legally binding agreement" between Serbia and the Albanian Kosovo. Thereby, emphasis is laid on the interpretation that the legally binding agreement does not demand Serbia's formal "rec-

ognition of [the] independence” of the temporarily occupied territory (the recognition on the part of Serbia is actually demanded because that is *its* occupied territory), but the expressions are masking blackmail: if membership in the European Union is Serbia’s priority for vital reasons, these vital reasons shall be unrealizable unless the state recognizes the independence of the occupied part of its territory. Seemingly, Serbia should decide freely and independently, yet this is in fact blackmail (a ‘credible’ one, for it emerges after the forceful change of the legal order and factual state of affairs).

The blackmail has been undertaken by the countries which designed the UN Security Council’s Resolution 1244 which confirmed the principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the F.R. of Yugoslavia, i.e. of the Republic of Serbia – after Serbia had been militarily incapacitated in terms of effectively controlling her territory and the populace in the temporarily occupied part of her territory. By the Resolution 1244, the United Nations was made the guarantor of Serbia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity in Kosovo and Metohija, but the main protagonists of the new situation and the authors of the Resolution have invalidated and dodged the guarantees. Henceforth, violence has been promoted in opposition to the law, which simply means that the defeated party in this case is not Serbia but the law. Consequently, the power which suspends the law continues with blackmail in order to legalize the effect of the violence. Therefore, it has to be underlined that whatever is going on in Kosovo and Metohija is taking place in irregular circumstances of foreign occupation, and foreign occupation must be seen as *temporary* regardless of its duration. It is that very state of affairs (the presence of foreign troops which have occupied the territory of Kosovo and Metohija) which produces as its consequence the incapability of the Administration of the Republic of Serbia to implement the Constitution on that territory. And now, it is demanded that Serbia recognizes its own damage resulting from “the law of the strongest” – as its interest. Whoever else has recognized “Kosovo” has actually recognized their own interests and their politics, that is, themselves; henceforth, those are not true recognitions. As a matter of fact, those are follow-ups to the already executed intention to tear away part of Serbia’s territory. The state of affairs established by force is not valid as long as the party suffering the violence does not give its consent to it. That is – in normative terms – exactly the reason why the recognition on the part of Serbia is the most important issue; for Serbia, it would mean admission of her own defeat, with Serbia itself as an accomplice. It would be only then that the defeat of the law would get a certificate of legitimacy – with Serbia’s defeat ‘printed’ on the back. When people do not know what they should do, they must know what they should *not* do for

the world: by no means and in no form should they recognize legalization of the forceful tearing away of Kosovo and Metohija. Recognition in any form would imply that we give up our right and duty to defend ourselves, which means that we would thus endanger our own integrity and identity.

Normativity

However, if at this moment it is not realistic to show up on the battlefield, it is an imperative not to leave the field of normativity – the field of the law and morals, the ideals and values of free and responsible people. In the case of Kosovo and Metohija, numerous normative questions arise for us which we must take into account as both individuals and the community. Those questions concern the law, morals, tradition, values, and they are all essential for the identity of the Serbian people, their self-understanding and self-assertion, with an active function in the building of the state and the society.

Our awareness of belonging to a concrete historical community and of our responsibility as transgenerational, as well as the consciousness of the moral unity of a historical period (which we cannot give up) – those are the foundations of our *historical responsibility* (and an ethic of the historical responsibility). Historical responsibility demands that one has to possess one's own *attitude* in a concrete situation, one's own *perspective* as a landmark in space and time. Generally speaking, in order to orient himself in space and time, one has to work out a mental/cognitive map of reality for himself; our ideas about reality thus become functional, they gain a purpose. This *perspectivism* neither means that one sticks to his provincial views (within a detached and non-communicable identity), nor does it imply one's succumbing to a reportedly comfortable and integrative generality in the sense-related context of which we do not make decisions (being integrated in the European Union is depicted as one's being connected to an infusion pump in a safe incubator). Perspectivism implies the will and competence to make one's own attitude relevant, to make one's own perspective universal, that is, to lend it qualities which 'force' the others to take it into account.

Historical responsibility and the integrity of the historical period (our Round Table is titled *Kosovo and Metohija: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*) suggest that historic events oblige us. Courage and responsibility of existence in history oblige us to the axiomatic decision that Kosovo and Jasenovac³ are the major and undeniable parts of our identity

³ **Jasenovac** is a village in the region of Slavonia, Croatia, but the name here (and usually) stands for the system of concentration camps established in its vicinity

which nobody can deprive us of – unless we give them up. The axiomatic significance of great historic events consists in their providing a value-related orientation and the fulcrums in which we see some super-historical purpose. Based on the chivalrous and sacrificial Vidovdan at Kosovo, the ideals of *Vidovdan ethic* have been built up, that is – justice and humaneness, self-sacrifice and suffering, atonement and forgiveness, tolerance and generosity; which is in fact the ethic of the Christian culture and, henceforth, the ethic of Sacrifice. The Vidovdan sacrifice gives testimony of a total and radical realism which makes us face the brutal concretization of history. Historical truth is neither logical nor universal, but event-related and unique. An event of sublime sacrifice has the meaning of the presence of *the sacred*, lending sense to a historical period. It becomes the truth of a historical period. Of course, preparedness for sacrifice does not mean glorification of sacrifice as a value *per se*, for the value of sacrifice lies in its purity and aim. The sense and purpose of history must be – salvation and upgrading of life, for otherwise we would be left with a sense-denying endurance in the flow of physical time. The Vidovdan at Kosovo and [the concentration camp of] Jasenovac are singular paradigms of sacrifice which enable us to grasp the events as *our* history. For a nation, history is what a particular nation sees in its own history. Our insight into our own history enables us not only to bear the brutality of history, but also to understand and accept history. For the Serbian nation, which is small in number yet aspires to be great in character, history is – for that very reason – affliction. Sacrifice is the paramount memory shining over the events that have taken place in history. Sacrifice and affliction (that is, the experience of the sufferings lived through over the past, the historical experience of threshold-situations, victories and defeats, glory and humiliations) have an epistemic sense because they make history graspable. Hence the hermeneutical significance of the suffering nations for their understanding of history – provided we are capable of viewing historical events from the perspective of the Sacrifice made.

The truth from the perspective of the Sacrifice as a subject essentially differs from the truth seen from the perspective of violence which seeks a sacrifice-maker as an object. Violence by stigmatization construes the sacrifice-maker as an object thus rationalizing its acts; it

during World War Two. Operating under the Ustashe rule in the wartime Independent State of Croatia from August 1941 to April 1945, it was an extermination camp referred to as ‘the Auschwitz of the Balkans’ or ‘the Auschwitz of Yugoslavia’. The majority of the victims were Serbs; others included Jews, Roma and a number of political dissidents. The postwar estimates cited about 700,000 victims, while the Jasenovac Memorial Site currently offers the figure of between 80,000 and 100,000. The worst characteristics of the massacres were the unparalleled number of children and the personal/non-‘industrial’ methods of torturing and killing. – *Translator’s note.*

vilifies the sacrifice-maker, thus masking the sacredness of sacrifice. In addition, it masks its own nature: the contemporary violence, as modernized barbarity and new absolutism, uses peace-making justification of violence through the construction of guilt. The stigmatization of the Serbian people as an effort to invalidate their identity and impose guilt as an instrument of control, 'branding' we have felt on our own 'skin' during the last civil war that often applied anti-Serbian propaganda as practised in the First World War is in fact a technique which first drives the signified object (the Serbian nation) out of the field of morals before, as the next step, the object is driven out of the field of law: once disqualified as a moral being, the object is made susceptible to the exertion of illegal violence.

Therefore, what we have to defend in Kosovo and Metohija is: the law instead of violence, truth instead of prevarication, tradition instead of the future illusions. One of the preconditions for the defence of normativity is – memory. Historical memory, as a postulate of the historical knowledge, and historical self-consciousness as safeguarding the fulcrums of the national identity in the historical existence, are necessary for the accumulated consciousness of the past and for the orientation in the future. The sooner the better, because in the societal sphere we are exposed to the superimposition of a structural amnesia as extinction of selected points in the memory (*damnatio memoriae*). Research into the structures of social memory and remembrance, as well as disclosure of the techniques of deforming memory and remembrance, are the preconditions of critical-historical knowledge and historical self-consciousness. The creation of the need for liberation from history, which is actually equal to the emptying of identity, has a dramatic consequence: identity falling into oblivion.

It is impermissible to interpret the Vow of Kosovo as a Kosovo "myth" in a banal and pejorative sense, the sense of an archaic and phantasmagorical burden to be disposed of. Myth is a sacred story about sacred events; myth introduces sacredness into social life thus building the normative axiomatics of the society, it lays foundations for and accounts for the norms of social behaviour. The function of myth is to introduce sense into the history of a community. Schelling thought that it is not the history of a nation which creates its myths, but the opposite: the myths of a nation determine its customs and history; and more than that, myth is the destiny of a nation, just as a man's character is his destiny. The myth of Kosovo is a(n) (epic, historical, existential) transformation of the dramatic and unbearable historic event into meaningfulness which becomes efficacious in the orientation through history. The Myth/Vow of Kosovo is a foothold to normativity and the meaningfulness of the historical existence of the Serbian nation,

which satisfies the need for orientation in order to – in accordance with the national character – respond to the reality of history and to preserve and strengthen the identity while going through historical blows. The myth of Kosovo, like myth in general, tells us that the system of values as a normative postulate of a state/society is not created by the state, but that it originates in the moral and religious sphere which comes from spiritual and ethical traditions, and these traditions are for that reason socially obliging. Individuals cannot produce the normative structure of the society without the value-implicating category of the sacred which is an axiom of the concept of society – in an evidentiary way. To sum up, what we should defend in Kosovo and Metohija is that which is sacred to us and which therefore possesses the strength needed to generate the norm and meaningfulness of our historical character.

Conclusion

The complex problem of Kosovo and Metohija should be broken down to its structural elements and then we should set out to solve the elements – persistently, patiently, and as long as it takes. “The legally binding agreement on a comprehensive normalization of relations” (it is the same as, or worse than, recognition!) should be understood as a complex and long-lasting process which must include all the issues that concern the Serbs and Serbia (those of the territory, military, Church, culture, economy, history, law, morals, spiritual life). By no means and in no form should we recognize the legalization of the forceful tearing away of Kosovo and Metohija. It is not in our interest to undertake actions that are unacceptable on principle and those which could lead toward general confusion in the Serbian society, to futile and exhausting disputes, and to conflicts among the Serbs. On the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, the Serbian factor should be strengthened and the Albanian one weakened. We must explicitly emphasize our right to defend in Kosovo and Metohija what is sacred and consequently has the force to generate the norm and meaningfulness of our existence in history. We have to be determined and keep preparing ourselves for some more favourable moment (the circumstances today are more favourable than those of some twenty years ago). It does not mean – to prolong and do nothing; it means – the strengthening of our national and state vitality upon the temptations faced in Kosovo, day by day.

Translated from Serbian by
Angelina Čanković Popović

BOJAN JOVANOVIĆ

THE KOSOVO HUB

As the area was formed as part of an integrated Serbian ethnic, cultural and spiritual territory, Kosovo and Metohija have within such entity gained an exceptional significance for the national consciousness and cultural identity of the Serbs. Under unfavourable historical circumstances, the area became the target of the aggressive Albanian population, that is, *Arbanasi* – as it used to be called, or *Šiptari/Shqiptarët* – as it named itself, which, siding with the occupying forces, gradually took it over and suppressed the Serbs.

With insight into the historical processes which have led to the current state of affairs, one can distinguish several characteristic periods defined by some crucial events that proved of decisive importance for the ethnic prevalence of the Albanians in the region. As soon as in the aftermath of the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, a metastatic settlement of the Arbanasi people took place in Kosovo and Metohija; following the fall of the Serbian medieval state in 1459 and the establishment of the Ottoman rule, it took an organized form of colonization in the Serbian areas – within the Turkish policy. Protected by the Turkish rule and privileged due to the religion they shared with the Turks, the Islamized Arbanasi terrorized the Serbs who either emigrated therefrom or stayed there at the cost of accepting Islam and the ensuing Arbanasization.

The next crucial event took place in the form of two Great Migrations of the Serbs (1690 and 1739), conditioned by the retreat of the Austrian army whose preceding successful war against Turkey had incited the Serbs to confront the Ottomans. Thereafter, the deserted towns and villages in Kosovo and Metohija were settled by the Arbanasi.

Another significant period occurred in the second half of the 19th century, during the war of Serbia, Montenegro and Russia against the Ottoman Empire (1878). Toward the Congress of Berlin (1878) which

recognized Serbia as an independent state with the territorial expansion to the liberated districts of Niš, Pirot, Toplica and Vranje, the Ottoman authorities – with the purpose of preventing the parts of southern Serbia and Kosovo-Metohija falling under the Serbs, i.e. within Serbia or Montenegro – financed a group of Albanians loyal to the Sultan, and they launched a programme of their own at a gathering held in Prizren on June 10, 1878. Through this aggressive anti-Serbian programme, advocating the autonomy and unification of all areas where Albanians lived regardless of whether they made up majority or minority there, the Albanians emphasized a pretension to the creation of Greater Albania, ignoring the interests and rights of the Serbs in those areas. Since that moment and until 1912, more than 150,000 Serbs were displaced from the region, and Albanian settlers were colonized therein. Western journalists wrote reports on the terror and atrocities committed by the Albanians against the Serbs; that is something one has to bear in mind when writing about the reaction of the Serbian army in the early 20th century – during the Balkan Wars for the liberation of Kosovo and Metohija.

With the final liberation of these areas which after the Balkan Wars entered Serbia, and after the Great War became parts of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, it was possible for the Serbian population to come back to their agelong homes. However, the Albanian dream about a great state of their own was revived during the new occupation carried out in World War Two. Supported by the Italians first, and – after their capitulation of 1943 – by the Germans, the Albanians collaborated with the Nazis within the military-political alliance of the Second Prizren League, the aim of which was to gain backup for the realization of their concept of Great Albania. World War Two was marked by horrible Albanian crimes against the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija.

The nationalist activities of the Albanians did not cease after World War Two: in the year 1946, they formed the Third Prizren League in the U.S.A. which – relying on propaganda and raids/sabotage, as well as the backup from Albania – set the goal, like the previous two Leagues, of creating Greater Albania. Exposed to the Albanian terror, the Serbs in the postwar period also bore the brunt of the hostility manifested by the new, Communist authorities which – fighting against an alleged ‘Great-Serbian hegemony’ – forbade the return of the Serb colonists to Kosovo and Metohija first, and then tolerated the Albanian violence against the Serbian population. One of the causes of the present-day situation in Kosovo and Metohija was the kitsch Communist ideology which idealized the state of affairs in the area and concealed the hard position of the Serbs, whereby any call of attention to that would be interpreted as Serbian nationalism. Through the newly-passed

amendments to the Constitution of 1971, Kosovo and Metohija was given the status of an autonomous province beyond the authority of the Republic [of Serbia]; this further worsened the difficult situation of the Serbs in the area. When the results of research on this situation were published in 1986, it was concluded that the Albanians used a variety of methods aimed at pressuring and forcing the Serbs to leave. Following the presentation of those results, and facing the unenviable state of affairs – not in terms of security only but also of economy and politics – of Serbia within Yugoslavia, the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts decided to go public with its attitude and start to work on a related Memorandum. There were efforts to compromise the project by the illegal publishing of some parts of the working paper and unfinished text in the press, but the protagonists of this act were soon defeated politically by their rivals who responded to the need to react in a more energetic and faster manner to the urgent issue of Kosovo and Metohija. It was through the foundation of the Albanian terrorist organization, the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army,¹ in 1994, that the war broke out in the region, for the KLA kept launching attacks on the Serbian police and army and civilians, thus fighting for the independence of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija and the creation of Greater Albania.

Bypassing the Strait

Although Kosovo and Metohija are not the parent country of the Albanian population, there is a clear continuity of its aspiration to take over this territory of Serbia. Although all the occupiers and all ideologies under the wings of which Greater-Albanian nationalism was flourishing suffered defeat, its results survived up to the moment in which the western powers and NATO – backing up Albanian terrorism in the struggle against the Serbian population and Serbia's regular police and military forces – occupied the area in 1999, thus enabling the Albanians to proceed with the persecutions and killing of the Serbs and to proclaim secession of this part of the Serbian territory on February 17, 2008. The unilateral proclamation of the independence of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija from the Republic of Serbia and the ensuing creation of the so-called 'Republic of Kosovo' have been supported and recognized by the leading countries of the West and, under the pressures of these, some smaller vassal states such as Montenegro and Croatia.

¹ The abbreviation of the English name reads KLA; in Serbian, it is called *Oslobodilačka vojska Kosova (OVK)*, and in Albanian the name reads *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës (UÇK)*. – *Translator's note.*

The causes of the current situation in Kosovo and Metohija have deep roots, and these causes are insufficiently considered by those who tend to get an insight into them and find an adequate solution. Since the attempts at such consideration are characterized by some crucial inconsistencies and contradictions, the purpose of any rightful action should be to – first – adequately comprehend this entanglement and the knotty problem of Kosovo and Metohija, and – next – to envisage it in a framework open toward the future. That would make it possible for the problem to be considered in a broader context and for the strait, in which two-way passage becomes dramatic and inevitably leads to tragical conflicts, to be bypassed.

Seen as a major national ‘trial-venue’, Kosovo is the central point, the hub of the spiritual existence of the Serbs; therefore, the manner in which the problem is going to be tackled is one of the determinants of our future. Due to a lack of patience and the need for long-lasting devotion to the solution of the issue of Kosovo, some ideas emerge about ‘cutting’ it – like Alexander the Great’s use of his sword in order to undo the Gordian knot. Of course, nothing is more mistaken than that, for no problem that grew for centuries can be solved in a short time and in an easy way. Therefore, the promises given by some politicians today – that they shall solve the problem of Kosovo during their term in power – are a dangerous illusion, the possible realization of which, under the current unfavourable circumstances for the Serbs and Serbia, would result in unforeseeable and far-reaching negative consequences. Under the unfavourable international circumstances, which have already made it possible [for the Albanians] to occupy Serbia’s southern province and by themselves proclaim its independence, Serbia cannot hope for any favourable solution. As in similar situations some organisms cocoon in order to survive, the ghettoized Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija can resist the temptation of extinction only by preserving their national and cultural identity, with the assistance and support of Serbia.

To cast light upon this problem and elucidate it means to primarily bear in mind the attitude to obscurities, paradoxicalities and contradictions which consciously or unconsciously hide the true intentions or fail to emphasize these clearly enough. Unlike the uncertain future, the present time – provided there is no chance to alter the negative consequences of the past – offers the possibility to grasp these adequately. Thus, though the negative aspects of the past may be denied, suppressed and forgotten, the present moment offers an opportunity for straightforward confronting them. In a sense, that may be confrontation with one’s own shadow, but the space of darkness is much too vast to be limited to just one segment of its negativity.

The Most Hurtful Serbian Word

Whatever the Albanian nationalists and terrorists have done to the Serbs and Serbia in Kosovo and Metohija in order to ethnically cleanse the area and proclaim secession – served the purposes of the great powers of the West and of NATO. Since the year 1999 until today, they have destroyed more than 150 Serbian churches and/or monasteries with the sole motive and goal to erase every trace of the Serbian national presence in Kosovo and Metohija, and to attempt to create an ethnically clean state. At the same time, the international circumstances have not changed, and within that context the Serbs are still under accusations and proclaimed the chief culprits within the events in Kosovo and Metohija.

When something that causes pain is uttered, one does not consider the correctness of it but responds stressing that it is a consequence of facing the truth. The pain tends to be evidence of the truthfulness of what has been said, but also to ignore what hurts more than truth is the lie embodied in some stereotypes about the Serbs, demonstrated by some intellectuals and writers, such as Bernard-Henri Lévy and Herta Müller when they came to Serbia in the service of the Western centres of power and upon the invitations by their local like-minded hosts, financed and stimulated from the same source. Historically determined by our deep national trauma, Kosovo has become the most hurtful Serbian word, a mention of which in that context only intensifies this extremely uneasy feeling. Expectedly enough, those who do not feel the pain, or who inflict it on others applying the current stereotypes about the Serbs, reconfirm that too much has been invested into the lies on the exclusively Serbian guilt in the conflicts in Kosovo and Metohija as a cause of the intervention and the occupation of this part of Serbia and, therefore, any new insights and the truth cannot be allowed to disperse the said clichés. There is no place for such optimism, for it is determined by a broader context of the relations between the West and Russia, and of their rivalry which has grown into diplomatic hostilities and a war by sanctions. Since that makes the framework for the communication between Serbia and the Albanians of Kosovo and Metohija, any agreement which may question the outcome of that enormous investment of the West into the independent Kosovo is – impossible. The West does not want and does not recognize any agreement which fails to be in accordance with their interests. The situation is identical to the one in Bosnia-Herzegovina toward the breakout of the war in 1990's, when the Serbian and the Muslim parties agreed on a peaceful solution by accepting the so-called "Cutileiro Plan" which did not suit the West, i.e. Americans who forced Alija Izetbegović to give up the established

agreement and, with the assistance promised, start the war against the Serbs. Thus, it is only possible – within the current constellation of political powers – that the Serbs and Serbia serve the purposes of the project concerning the so-called independent “Kosovo”, accepting the ultimatums within the reported negotiations and solutions reached.

Any current debate about Kosovo and Metohija is in the serious political shadow of the already ongoing talks between Serbia and the authorities of the self-proclaimed Kosovo within the “Brussels Agreement” conditioned by Serbia’s negotiations with the European Union about the country’s accession to that organization. As the finalization of the talks with Kosovo is – as the European officials emphasize – envisaged in the form of a mutual legally binding recognition of the two parties, there are justified doubts (expressed in the speeches of numerous participants in organized debates within the so-called internal dialogue about Kosovo and Metohija, and in the Appeal for the Defence of Kosovo and Metohija) that such a dire outcome would not be in the function of the protection of Serbia’s national and state interests. It will soon be seen whether the announced change of the Constitution of Serbia is aimed at an alteration in the legal status of Kosovo and Metohija as a constituent part of the Republic of Serbia, or if the new constitution will keep the status of the southern province unchanged. In answer to the question of whether the solution to the issue of K&M is possible within the Serbian Constitution, [President] Vučić said, in his interview for the RTS² of January 14, 2018, that he “fears that the solution is not possible”. This shows that the fears about the solution to the issue of Kosovo and Metohija being seen beyond the existing Constitution are justified. In that sense, a renunciation and recognition of Kosovo and Metohija would mean a shift in the demarcation line of the crisis-stricken territory within Serbia, and the country’s south would become a new hot spot of the Greater-Albanian aspirations.

Serbian Concessions

Serbia’s problem in this political process lies in inconsistency, i.e. in the lack of principles. The question arises: Does Serbia *really* consider Kosovo and Metohija a territory of its own, a province of its own, while the self-proclaimed state of “Kosovo” is taken here to be a fictitious, false and unworthy of recognition? Or are these attributes but declaratory emphases while the country’s own sovereignty is being torn off bit by bit and ceded to that state? The establishment of border

² Abbreviation for *Radio televizija Srbije*, i.e. Serbian Broadcasting Corporation.
– Translator’s note.

crossings which are no longer just administrative, the allocation of an international phone code, the anti-constitutional abolition of Serbian institutions, allowing Kosovo membership in international organizations (in this respect, the behaviour of our delegation during the membership procedure for Kosovo in the International Olympic Committee was shameful at the very least) and a series of other concessions – all indicate the problem of Serbia's consistency in the preservation of the country's sovereignty. Although the consent to participate in the negotiation process implied some pragmatism in the political conduct, the series of concessions given so far is taking the form of a principle – the principle of Serbian concession-making. Such pragmatism and the policy of constant relenting rouse justified fears that the road does not run toward the preservation of Kosovo and Metohija as a part of Serbia's territory, for what is actually going on is the establishment of 'creeping' statehood by the boiling frog method.

Reality vs. Law

What goes on in the shadow of that process is a premeditated delay in the formation of the Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities as a long-lasting humiliation to which the Serbs and Serbia have been exposed after the series of concessions made to the Albanian side. Without any adequate protection, the Serbs are left to the horrible terror and deprivation of rights, unable to resist violence, setting fire to their harvests, the theft and usurpation of their property, persecutions, and arrests as alleged suspects for war crimes. The organized violence against the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija does not cease, while the repression which intermittently intensifies, to culminate in murders, is carried out with the aim of making their life there senseless; these practices are the means used to drive them out of the area.

The suggestions and ideas about the forceful separation of this occupied region of Serbia emphasize the current reality as an argument, requesting the factual state of affairs as the basis of its legislative confirmation. The traditional principle "your sheep – your mountain" is invoked as an argument although it has lost in significance in the contemporary world; for, the world now takes the law as reality and factuality – hence the owner of a land property is the one who owns the signed document thereon, the churches and monasteries on that land. The said suggestions and requests are put in by those who – when their own interests are in question – stress the very importance of the legal reality, of the ownership rights; therefore, they are prepared for as much as a war in order to defend the property rights, the right to their territory. For instance, Great Britain started the war against Argentina over the

Falkland Islands which lie several thousands of kilometers far from its borders – only because Argentinians used those hardly populated isles as pastureland. Yet when Serbia is in question, the same legal principle is abandoned and a policy of double standards is established according to which Kosovo and Metohija are a *sui generis* case wherein the current legislation does not apply. Since all the legal argumentation is favourable for Serbia, reality should be brought into accord with it. If the factual reality cannot be altered at this moment, we must not – at any cost – consent to an alteration of the international legal reality which clearly defines Kosovo and Metohija as a part of Serbia.

The fundamental difference between reality and law indicates the basic pattern of numerous contradictions related not only to the indefinite situation in Kosovo and Metohija, but also to the efforts aimed at its definition and solution. The contradictions characterize not only the European and American officials in their advocacy of double standards, but also those intellectuals who are in their consideration of the issue of Kosovo and Metohija trying to be objective and just. One of the latter is Martin Heipertz, the author of the book *Makijato diplomatija – Kosovo, mrtvi ugao Evrope* [*Macchiato Diplomacy – Kosovo in Europe's Dead Spot*],³ published in 2017 by Belgrade-based “Albatros plus”. He rightfully points out that “Kosovo” is a mistaken step of history, that there exists a mafia-ruled state, and that the fact that Europe has to cooperate with the leaders of that state such as Taçi and Haradinaj is – shocking and terrible. However, when underlining that the key issue of Serbia and the Serbs in their attitude toward Kosovo is not its recognition but the acceptance of loss, he actually advocates legalization of the problematic gain. If that contraption of a state came into being through the seizure of a part of a sovereign country's territory, which is a fact confirmed by the corresponding UN Resolution, the following question is raised: How can such a usurpation and theft be accepted as a loss within the context of the European legal system in which this cannot be legalized without the consent of the damaged party. It is in this sense that pressures are made on Serbia should it voluntarily renounce this part of its territory in settling the dispute and its borders to “Kosovo”, thus fulfilling this condition of its entry into the European Union. On Serbia's sketched roadmap to the EU, there is the full normalization of the relations between Serbia and Kosovo, which implies – as is said in the document – the settlement of the issue of borders between the two countries. Since the negotiation process between Serbia and the EU does not only mean the fulfilling of the legal/technical

³ The German title reads *Macchiato Diplomacy – Kosovo im toten Winkel Europas*. – Translator's note.

conditions such as harmonization of legislation, but also has a political aspect which implies insufficiency of facts and the dominance of the will and free assessment of facts based on current or long-range interests – there is a possibility that, while solving some current problems, new ones emerge as a way to prolong the realization of the desired goal.

Therefore, the very insistence on fulfilling that condition which is accentuated as “the precondition for all conditions” is itself problematic, for – bearing in mind that Cyprus was admitted to the EU with its problem unsolved, and that the issue of mutual borders had not been resolved by Slovenia and Croatia prior to their entry in this organization – it has been imposed on Serbia only. Although the negotiations with the EU have been conducted without a previous referendum-based decision, it is clear that any change of borders and their redefinition cannot be carried out without the opinion of Serbia’s citizenry. If the territorial integrity of the country is not questionable, the very question thereabout is ill-founded, and the road to the EU cannot run through self-denial and self-humiliation. In Serbia, there is already a ‘procession’ of those who are willing – provided there is a gift wrapped in bright-coloured paper that, once unpacked, would make them face a void as a big nothingness – to accept the loss and the deception as something self-understood and normal. But it seems that there is a far greater number of those who disagree with such a settlement and their role in the process. A critical period awaits Serbia which shall soon show whether the country will turn down the wrong path advocated by minority, or choose the road of self-assertion, in a historically worthy and honourable way, defending its national and state interests. That road also offers hope that the huge knot cannot be cut apart but must be gradually disentangled, opening the possibility for life in the region to move forward.

Translated from Serbian by
Angelina Čanković Popović

JOVAN DELIĆ

ON LEGITIMACY AND THE PLEDGE OF KOSOVO

In the introductory monologue to “The Mountain Wreath”, on Mount Lovćen, in the “dead of night”¹ while “everyone is asleep”, Bishop Danilo establishes the European, Balkan and national – Serbian – historical context of the event before him.

His “present moment” is toward the end of the 17th century and the Bishop feels that this moment is in direct historical connection with the earth-shattering events that have taken place since the second half of the 14th century. Given that Njegoš wrote and published these verses 170 years ago, it is clear that the gap between the first events mentioned in the introductory monologue and the time when that monologue was created is almost six centuries long.

Both then and today, events in world history are in direct connection, and so, as Isidora Sekulić puts it, in poetry, the “unrest of centuries” is strongly felt.

The Bishop’s monologue is long – it has 88 verses – but it sums up centuries, offering a daunting vision of history without law and justice. Verses 54 through 58 summarize the occupation of Serbia:

Is Serbia from the Danube River
to the blue sea too small an offering?
You rule the throne you’ve unjustly taken
and are prideful of your bloody scepter;

¹ Translated into English by Vasa D. Mihailovich, Professor of Slavic Languages, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (USA). Based on Second Revised Paper Edition, published by SERBIAN EUROPE, Belgrade, 1997. Accessed on archive.org on 16 December 2019.

The Serbian throne was *unjustly taken*, and ruling is with a *bloody scepter*.

The Bishop, therefore, challenges the legitimacy of the alien authorities to the wrongly seized throne, taken away with blood and violence. The struggle for freedom, as the greatest expression of humanity in Njegoš, has its legitimacy and its right. What has been wrongfully taken demands that the right be restored, the cosmic and historical balance. And legitimacy is remembered for centuries and established after half a millennium, if historical memory and legitimacy itself are preserved.

Preserving legitimacy means contesting any right to historical dispossession and violence against history and nations.

There is little that is new under the sun. The Bishop sees the greatest danger in the tactics of the new “devil’s Messiah” that offers privileges and a comfortable life, thus buying the identity of his opponents. A “good” and “comfortable” life is paid dearly:

And so began the devil’s Messiah
to offer them sweetmeats of his false faith.

The Bishop has nothing to challenge the choice of privileges and comfort but the ancestors’ pledge of Kosovo and the Kosovo sacrifice, namely the Kosovo vow, the Kosovo myth and – as Ivo Andrić would say – the Kosovo idea:

With what will you appear before Miloš
and before all other Serbian heroes,
whose names will live as long as the sun shines?

But the pledge of Kosovo offers neither sweetmeats nor a better life – nothing of worldly benefits, although it is exactly an earthly life that awaits them.

Njegoš, his Bishop Danilo, Vuk Mićunović, and even more Mustai-kadi and his men are aware of this. Njegoš gives a strong and wise critique of the pledge of Kosovo precisely from the perspective of Mustai-kadi, one of the most convincing heroes of “The Mountain Wreath”. A wise, knowledgeable, cunning, brilliant talker who spills “words sweet as honey”, Mustai-kadi will admonish the “petty people” in an effort to bring them to reason and convert them to a better life.

His long response to Voivode Batrić turns into a monologue, that is, a critique of the pledge of Kosovo, Christianity as a depressing and oppressive religion, and the greatest hymn to Istanbul ever written in the Serbian language. Mustai-kadi is a very modern thinker and con-

temporary critics of Christianity and the pledge of Kosovo are merely repeating his ideas without even realizing it.

Having rejected any thought of returning to the old faith – Christianity – the kadi shows loyalty to the “pure faith” – Islam – accepted for two hundred years, then invokes the Saint’s argument of brute force. The sanctity of his saint lies in the mace:

How can a weak linden cross be pitted
against the edge of our sharp, supple steel?
When the true saint strikes with his mighty mace,
the earth begins to quiver from his blow
like a hollow pumpkin on the water.

So first it is a mace, and not just anyone’s but the Saint’s – the threat of a beating. The modern age has only changed the means and perfected the technique: the mace comes from the stratosphere, in the form of depleted uranium bombs.

Bishop Danilo will reply to this argument of Mustai-kadi in as few as two verses (1155 and 1156), rejecting the humiliating ultimatum of the Vizier:

He whose law is written by his cudgel
leaves behind the stench of inhumanity.

Mustai-kadi then begins his critique of the pledge of Kosovo and Christianity, or rather Orthodox Christianity:

Petty people, how can you be so blind?
You do not know the joys of paradise.
You fight against both God and the people.
You live without hope and die without it.
You serve the Cross, want to be like Miloš!
“The Cross” – indeed an empty, lifeless word.
Miloš throws you into a strange stupor
or leads you to excessive drunkenness.

We do not know a better and more effective criticism of Christianity and the pledge of Kosovo, and it was written by the one who raised the cross, both Miloš and the pledge of Kosovo, the most – Njegoš. The “petty people” do not stand a chance in the battle against the most powerful of empires. Five hundred men, and twice as many that Vuk Mićunović mentions to encourage the Bishop, is ridiculous compared to the number of enemies. In addition, myth and religion

dazzle men, so they cannot rationally think or accept paradise on earth – another religion that brings a better life – “the joys of paradise”. This kind of life led by Montenegrins is “without hope”, a sign of blindness caused by a myth and an oppressive and depressive religion. Miloš is the synecdoche of the pledge of Kosovo, which makes one lose the ability to make rational judgments, to fall “into a strange stupor” and ecstasy, or “excessive drunkenness”.

After Njegoš, the critics of the pledge of Kosovo said nothing new, and especially nothing as brilliant. They are the ungifted heirs and spiritual descendants of Mustai-kadi.

And how was this Mustai-kadi’s wisdom accepted by the Njegoš’s Montenegrins?

With cynical gratitude and even more determination to defend themselves. Knez Janko will say, raising theatrically his hat in apparent gratitude:

O Effendi, I thank you very much!
You have preached us a marvelous sermon.
We have got what we have been asking for!

By critiquing the pledge of Kosovo from the perspective of Mustai-kadi, Njegoš pre-empted all future criticisms of that pledge two centuries ago and made them worthless.

Thus, it is necessary to preserve the legitimacy of both Serbian thrones of Kosovo – the church and the state – and remain faithful to the pledge of Kosovo, a pledge that was never aggressive to anyone, but always defensive, Christian, in the spirit of the New Testament.

Translated from Serbian by
Jovanka Kalaba

MILOŠ KOVAČEVIĆ

IS IT POSSIBLE TO GIVE UP THE SYMBOL OF THE SERBIAN PEOPLE'S NATIONAL IDENTITY?

What is it that a philologist can say about Kosovo? Very little in terms of politics, but probably more than anyone else, if valid arguments have to be substantiated, about the significance of Kosovo¹ for the Serbian culture, and for the Serbian literature and language in particular. Kosovo is the fundamental criterion in the classification of the Serbian folk epic poems that were recognized by Europe as the greatest contribution to the European culture of the 19th century. Kosovo is the epic classification watershed: what stands in the centre is the Kosovo Cycle (*kosovski ciklus*), while other cycles are timelined in relation to that one – as the Pre-Kosovo and Post-Kosovo Cycles (*pretkosovski* and *pokosovski ciklus*). It has been the Kosovo Cycle only which bore comparison to *The Iliad*. There have been a number of attempts to create a *LAZARICA* as an epic about Kosovo with the basic subject of Lazar's choice elaborated in the poem "The Fall of the Serbian Kingdom" („Propast carstva srpskog“): *O God Almighty, what's the choice now I should make? Which kingdom should I now prefer? ...The earthly one's a fleeting matter, The Kingdom of God an everlasting realm.*²

It has already been realized and underlined that “in the 21st century, to us, the Orthodox Serbs, the Kosovo choice is greater and harder than it was 800 years ago” (B. Nešić). Why? Because Prince Lazar had

¹ The term *Kosovo* is here used synecdochically, in a poetical manner, following the principle of *pars pro toto*, as designating the full term – *Kosovo and Metohija*, the common practice in the Serbian folk and art poetry. – *Author's note.*

² In this and other cases of literary quotations, the original lines will be presented in the footnotes. – *Translator's note.* Thus: *Mili bože, šta ću i kako ću? Kome ću se privoleti carstvu? ...zemaljsko je za malena carstvo, a nebesko uvek i doveka.*

a dilemma about an alternative. Yet how can one find an alternative to Kosovo, knowing that the folk poet, as the voice of the people, took Kosovo as compensation for all we did not have, even a sea. If you had Kosovo, you also had the sea; for, in the folk poem “Prince Marko and Ill-Tempered Bogdan” („Marko Kraljević i Ljutica Bogdan“), the folk poet sings: *Early rose and rode three dukes of Serbia / From Kosovo up the craggy coastal land!*³

Folk poems were an ‘identity card’ of the Serbian culture in Europe; they presented a purified tongue of the people turned into literature. Aware of that, we find it logical that Vuk’s catchphrase he⁴ was guided by throughout his language reform – “to introduce the language of the common folk into literature” – was a catchphrase which was grounded in folk poetry and, henceforth, in Kosovo as the most important subject and source thereof. Therefore, as long as the Serbs used to “read with their ears” – as the poet P. Pajić put it – Kosovo had no alternative. Neither had it an alternative in the time when Europe delighted in the Serbian folk poems which Leopold Ranke⁵ relied on to make Europe familiar with the Serbian revolution. And the source of the Serbian uprisers’ revolution was the Serbian cultural revolution embodied in the folk poetry, the Vow of Kosovo and the Reminder of Kosovo!

Today, again, we are facing a situation of choice-making: not between the heavenly and earthly kingdoms like Tsar Lazar, but concerned about the messages and values the two kingdoms convey. Indeed, what should we recommend to those who are to make the decision – first and foremost, the one about the political/legal status of Kosovo and Metohija? What should they do? Kosovo and Metohija are not objects of bargain, they are something one cannot do business with! For, doing business with them means business-making with our own cultural identity, trading in ourselves as the Serbs. So how in these circumstances can we preserve Kosovo and Metohija? Nothing else but with the preservation of the Serbian cultural identity. Kosovo and Metohija are the cradle of that identity: on every foot of that sacred Serbian land the identity is discernible/recognizable and confirmed.

³ *Poranile tri srpske vojvode / Od Kosova uz kršno primorje!*

⁴ **Vuk Stefanović Karadžić** (1787–1864) was the major reformer of the Serbian language and the father of the study of Serbian folklore, primarily the oral literary heritage. His translation of the *New Testament* into Serbian was one of the key events in the history of his mother tongue. Vuk Karadžić was member of the academies in Berlin, Vienna, Saint Petersburg, Moscow, Göttingen, Cracow and Paris. 1987 was ‘The UNESCO Year of Vuk Karadžić’. – *Translator’s note*.

⁵ **Leopold von Ranke** (1795–1886) was a German historian, founder of the modern historiography based on primary sources. In 1829, he published the book *Serbische Revolution* dealing with the two events that shaped Serbia as a modern country – the First Serbian Uprising (1804–13) and the Second Serbian Uprising (1815–17). – *Translator’s note*.

And the fundamental criterion of the Serbian national identity is – *the Serbian language*. Where the Serbian language is exposed to extirpation and where its structural/semantic laws are denied – the Serbian national identity is threatened most. And that is what is going on in Kosovo and Metohija and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Latin saying *Nomen est omen* ('The name is a sign') shows in the best way that the loss of national identity is in the first place and most clearly seen in the name itself. In a way, everything begins and ends in the name itself as the essence. Two current examples of the anti-Serbian linguistic marketing seem to indicate the claim most effectively. The examples are similar though not identical, so we shall comment upon both here. One refers to *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, the other to *Kosovo and Metohija*.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the denial and assimilation of the Serbs and the Serbian language is carried out through the attempt of the Bosniaks/Muslims to impose the so-called *Bosnian language* on all the inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina as the one spoken countrywide.

It is a generally well-known fact that, in the time of the Austro-Hungarian occupation of B&H in late 19th and early 20th century, the administrator [of the Condominium of Bosnia and Herzegovina – *Translator's note*.] Benjámín von Kállay proclaimed the "Bosnian language" as the "language of the province" by which he tried to establish a nation of "the Bosnians". The basic goal of his was to use the name of the language ("Bosnian") and the name of the nation based thereon ("Bosnians") to 'abolish' the Serbs and the Serbian language in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Owing to the strong resistance of the Serbs and the Serbian Church, the attempt failed. Yet today, Kállay's language policy has been resurging in a vampirish style: insisting upon the "Bosnian" language as the language of the country, it is aimed at extirpation of the Serbs and the Serbian language in B&H on the one hand; on the other, the introduction of the "Bosnian language" as an official language in the Raška District (the area never called that name by the Muslims – they solely name it *Sandžak*/Sanjak) which should demonstrate that Raška District is part of Bosnia. Thus, the term "Bosnian language" (*bosanski jezik*) is – with both Kállay and the Bosniak politicians and linguists of today – the corner stone of the imagined Bosnian nation whereof the Serbs are seen as its part.

Interestingly enough, the glotonym *bosanski jezik* is not derived from the full name of the country, but 'represents' only one of its constitutive parts. That is, if the country's name is not Bosn(i)a but – in both Kállay's and present time – *Bosna i Hercegovina*, how come that neither the name of the (imaginary) nation nor the name of the (proposed) language contain the term "Hercegovina" but only "Bosna"? How come

the ‘language of the country’ is not *bosansko-hercegovački* but only *bosanski*? In the inauguration of the “country people” and the “country language” of Bosnia and Herzegovina – where has Herzegovina been ‘lost’?

Scientifically (linguistically especially) speaking, the term *hercegovački* (‘Herzegovinian’) would be better grounded than the term *bosanski* (‘Bosnian’), for both the codifiers and the propagandists of the so-called Bosnian language have been referring to its Herzegovina dialectal provenance. So why have the propagandists and codifiers of the *zemaljski* (country) language thought that what should be done is elevate the *hercegovački dijalekt* to the level of a language which is to be named “*bosanski*” (‘Bosnian’) and not “*hercegovački jezik*” (‘Herzegovinian language’), or, at least, “*bosansko-hercegovački*” (‘Bosnian-Herzegovinian’)?!

In all probability, if not certainly, the reason lies in the fact that Herzegovina was always primarily or exclusively Serbian land, “the land of Saint Sava”.⁶ Which was logical enough, for in his charter issued to the Spalatians (people of present-day Split) in 1191, Stefan Nemanja explicitly refers to the Hum region as the land of “his son Rastko” (B. Letić); moreover, the man after whom Herzegovina got its name – Stefan Vukčić Kosača – was blessed and titled as “Herzeg⁷ of Saint Sava” at the monastery of Mileševa, in 1448. The Herceg’s lands were later named Herzegovina. In addition, the Herzegovinian dialect was/is the sole basis of the *Serbian standard language* as introduced by Vuk Karadžić. For that reason, this dialect has always and only meant the *Serbian standard language* which unifies all the Serbs regardless of their place of residence or religion. Historically and philologically, the term ‘Herzegovina’ refers to the Serbs to such an extent that neither Austro-Hungary nor the Ottoman Empire before it, could attach it to any other nation/people as its immanent trait. Since Herzegovina was and has remained a Serbian land – both *de facto* and as a palimpsest, neither Austro-Hungary nor the Bosniaks of today could base on it their anti-Serbian national/linguistic policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Well, that is why they avoid the term *hercegovački* (‘Herzegovinian’) – not only as one competing the term *bosanski* (‘Bosnian’), but also as part of the compound term for the country’s language which,

⁶ **Saint Sava** (Rastko Nemanjić by birth name, 1174 – 1236) was a Serbian prince who took monastic vows and later founded the autocephalous Serbian Orthodox Church, to become its first archbishop. As the youngest son of Grand Župan Stefan Nemanja, founder of the Nemanjić Dynasty, he had ruled the Principality of Hum (present-day Herzegovina and parts of Dalmatia) 1190-92, i.e. before he became a monk. – *Translator’s note.*

⁷ *Herzeg* is a variant of *herzog*, German hereditary title corresponding to the English ‘duke’. – *Translator’s note.*

considering the name of the country itself which (kindly be reminded) reads Bosnia and Herzegovina, could solely and correspondingly be named *bosansko-hercegovački*.

The term ‘Bosnian language’, however, implies ‘the language of Bosnia and Herzegovina’ as its content, and the content should cover all the constitutive peoples of in B&H. When the names of the language – one for the country (Bosnian) and one for a nation (Serbian) are brought into mutual relation, the Bosnian language is inevitably of higher order and, as the “country’s language” implies the national/ethnic names as subordinated thereto. For that reason, if the name ‘Bosnian language’ were accepted in the Republic of Srpska, it would not enjoy equal status with the Serbian language; the former would be superior to the latter. The Serbian language would only be a national/ethnic variant of Bosnian as the “country’s language”. That is why the Serbian people, as an autonomous people with its autonomous language in Bosnia and Herzegovina, cannot and must not accept the term ‘Bosnian language’, since it does not refer to “the language of the Bosniak people” but to the language of all the inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina. An acceptance of that name would mean the beginning of the end of not only the Serbian language in B&H but also the Serbian people in B&H; and that is something which none of the political representatives of the Serbian people and on the behalf of the Serbian people can accept. Moreover, nobody is allowed to recommend self-abolition to the Serbian people and an ‘integration’ of the Serbian language into “Bosnian”, for that would mean turning the Serbs into the language-designed ‘Bosnians’. Additionally, an acceptance of the term ‘Bosnian language’ as a language of one minority in Serbia would imply claiming of the “Bosnian right” to the Raška District, i.e. Sandžak [on Serbia’s territory – *Translator’s note*].

The anti-Serbian linguistic marketing related to Kosovo and Metohija is a game one can discern even more easily. According to the Constitution, the official name of that province in Serbia reads the “Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija” (*Autonomna Pokrajina Kosovo i Metohija*), the abbreviation being *AP KiM*. The name “Kosovo i Metohija” has the same linguistic structure as “Bosna i Hercegovina”. In both cases there is a two-part coordinated construction: two regions making up their given geographical territory are connected with the coordinating conjunction ‘and’ (*i*): *Bosna i Hercegovina*, *Kosovo i Metohija*. In both cases, following the principle of *pars pro toto*, there exists the practice (especially in literary writings and conversational idiom) of synecdochical reduction of the names to use their first part only in reference to both: *Kosovo* (for Kosovo and Metohija) and *Bosn(i)a* (for Bosnia and Herzegovina). If resorted to out of political and not poetical motive, the practice implies some anti-Serbian cause. We have seen

above the reasons for the avoidance of the term ‘Herzegovina’, especially in the name of the “country’s language” and the designed name of the “country’s nation”. For the erasure of the name of Metohija, the Albanians were motivated by the meaning of that lexeme. That is, the original meaning of *metohija* is ‘the land managed by a monastery’. The name comes from the Greek word *μετοχιον* (Serbian *metoh*, English *appendage*) designating a “community of monks who work monastic land”. In the Middle Ages, the meaning was developed by the Serbs into “monastic estate” (*manastirsko imanje*) and it has survived as the primary meaning in the Serbian language until the present day. Since the name of Metohija [area] is directly associated with the Serbian Orthodox Church, and there are more than 1,500 Serbian churches/monasteries in Kosovo and Metohija, small wonder that to the Albanians, especially Albanian nationalists, the name bears very negative connotations. With this in mind, should we wonder that the world powers have omitted the word ‘Metohija’ in the UN Security Council’s Resolution 1244 and in the documents related to the recognition of the unilaterally proclaimed independence of this autonomous province in Serbia. Thereby, the whole of the Province is referred to as merely *Kosovo* (Albanian *Kosova*) with the attributive ‘republic’. Unfortunately, the name is used not only by foreign statesmen/officials and the so-called government of Kosovo and the UNMIK [United Nations Interim Administration Mission], but also a great number of the Serbs and the Serbian media – in both written and oral practice.⁸ The acceptance of the new choronym, the one imposed by the Albanians, actually means acceptance of the Albanian interpretation and, eventually, acceptance of the “the reality on the ground”. Consequently, this implies that the linguistic form of the derived ethnonym or demonym is ever more frequently used by the Serbian media so as to follow the standard of the Albanian and not the Serbian language. It is well-known that in the Serbian language an inhabitant of Kosovo and Metohija is correctly referred to as *Kosovac* (male) and *Kosovka* (female), while the Albanians call the residents of Kosovo *Kosovari* (plural).

It is also interesting that the choronyms *Kosovo i Metohija* and *Bosna i Hercegovina*, despite their identical linguistic structures, do not have identical abbreviations. Truth is, the two choronyms *can* be abbreviated in the same way, that is, by the so-called ‘open shortening’ which implies combination of capital and small letters: *BiH* and *KiM*. Such half-acronymic abbreviation is the sole style in the shortening of the choronym *Bosna i Hercegovina*, but not of the choronym *Kosovo i Metohija*.

⁸ It should be noted again that such use is acceptable only when synecdochical. – *Author’s note.*

Namely, the current *Pravopis srpskog jezika* (book of orthographic and punctuation rules for the Serbian language) published by Matica srpska (2010) provides in its dictionary section the verbalized abbreviation for Kosovo and Metohija produced by blending the first syllables of the two nouns – *Kosmet*, with an omission of the conjunction.⁹ There is a number of possibilities to name this autonomous region in Serbia correctly either in full or in an abbreviated form, so we must wonder why the Serbs so often choose *the* one which is unacceptable in terms of both structure and semantics, the one which reflects the Albanian ‘view’ of *Kosovo i Metohija*, i.e. *Kosmet* or *KiM*. One should never forget that the acceptance of a non-Serbian ‘language situation’ is as a rule an introduction to the acceptance of anti-Serbian ‘matter-of-fact situation’, which actually implies acceptance of the Albanian position to the disadvantage of the Serbian one.

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While the Serbian culture prevails in Kosovo as the source and cradle of the Serbian identity, the Serbian language is slowly disappearing outside of the northern part and the “Serbs’ enclaves”. Opposite to the fact about the domination of the Serbian culture and the Serbian Kosovo-related history stands the fact of the numerical (count-based) domination of the Albanians. One shall hardly find an example of a numerically minority-nation dominating – except in terms of culture – over the numerically majority-nation. We have thus reached a situation in which the Serbs – observed within the whole of the Kosovo population – are outstandingly the minority population. Yet if the criterion of territorial distribution is applied, the Serbs – just as the Albanians south of the Ibar river are the prominent majority compared to the Serbs – make an absolute majority compared to the Albanians north of the Ibar (from Severna/North Mitrovica to Lešak). Should not the clear solution result from that fact? The Serbian cultural heritage must be preserved and protected applying all the world-standard criteria of heritage protection, while the Serbian land, the compact part of Kosovo and Metohija – must belong to the Serbs, that is, it must be – Serbia.

⁹ The question is one of whether the blend ‘Kosmet’ is a unique example of creating verbalized abbreviation in the Serbian language, one derived from a two-part coordinated phrase by combining the initial syllables of two nouns and ignoring the existence of the conjunction (cf. *Kosovo i Metohija* → *Kosmet*). Applied on the equivalent structure of the choronym *Bosna i Hercegovina*, the same word-building abbreviation principle would produce the never-used verbalized abbreviation **Boher* (cf. *Bosna i Hercegovina* → **Boher*). – Author’s note.

If the international community wants the existence of two Albanians' states in the Balkans, can the Serbs present the Serbs as a gift? Are they allowed to talk about demarcation, are they allowed to talk about federalization of K&M, are they allowed to say that the Albanian question in the Balkans must not be settled to the detriment of the Serbian one? Therefore, those who come into the position of decision-makers must lay down a condition for the solution to the Kosovo issue, and the condition is – the overall solution of the Serbian national issue in the Balkans. And that will solely be possible when the circumstances concur so as to make the Serbian 'friends' abroad realize that working "to the 'benefit' of the Serbian detriment" cannot last for ever in the expectation of the Serbs' (permanent) consent!

Translated from Serbian by
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KOSOVO AND METOHIJA: WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

Facing the dramatic issue of Kosovo and Metohija, it is easier to say what should *not* be done at any cost than what we should do. Two opposite solutions have to be avoided by all means: on the one hand, Kosmet must not be recognized as a sovereign state; on the other hand, we must avoid any new conflict with NATO. Provided politics is the art of finding good solutions within the actuality of the relations with the centres of economic, political and military power, we realistically expect and demand from the political representatives we have voted in by the majority-made decision of voters – to be adroit enough in finding optimum solutions to problem-ridden situations like those we are involved in. Considering the multitude of sources of information available to the Serbian state – ranging from direct talks to the world's leading statesmen, via the diplomatic service and intelligence agencies, to the broadest selection of advisers/specialists in many particular fields – we can hope that all the necessary conditions will be ensured for the system to function to the benefit of the people who make its *raison d'être*. In that sense, such expectations and demands are not deprived of a realistic foundation.

Today, the situation is more favourable for the policy of balancing between the confronted parties of political power than it was in 2008, the year in which the Assembly at Kosovo unilaterally proclaimed independence and some countries recognized that status worldwide. The situation is more favourable for us than the one of 2004, when the horrible pogrom against the Serbian civil population was carried out in Kosmet. And certainly much more favourable than the situation in 1999, when the Serbs were labeled as the pariahs of Europe and the world on the whole, when they were vilified consistently and systematically, and

when bombings were carried out in an extremely brutal way. Some major changes occurred in 2014-15, when it became obvious that the events in Ukraine and Syria clearly showed that the globe was seeing the end to the unipolar world, and that a bipolar structure (western countries vs Russia) was established with a tendency toward the emergence of some additional centres of international powers (China, India, Indonesia, Brazil and others) which should considerably complicate the overall state of affairs. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that this moment – the years 2017-18 – is not the most favourable one for us and that a more suitable moment for the solution of the problem of Kosovo and Metohija is yet to come in the future. Right now, we should do our best to the advantage of that future moment, the moment we have to prepare in an active manner.

What We Have to Do

What has been said above should not make us entrenched in a passive stance or some dormant expectation that someone out there, in the abstract mist of the future, should solve the problematic situation that keeps troubling us. It is as soon as this very moment that we have to improve our level of organization and begin to actively work on the strategy which should lead us to the desired goal. In other words, the problem itself is not insolvable; what makes it easier is our historical experience of losing not only Kosovo and Metohija but also of losing the statehood of Serbia. This should facilitate the re-examination of our historical heritage and help us reach some solutions on the grounds of which we can determine – in terms of strategy – how we should proceed.

It is above all necessary to work out, and take advantage of, all the possibilities of a systematically elaborated strategy of dialogue – to the utmost. The basic manner of our communication with the world should bear the sign of persuasive skills and well-argued talk. Thereby, one should not overlook the fact that we have on our side many arguments and principles of legal, moral and political life, so these should be taken advantage of. Admittedly, those arguments have been presented before, but not appreciated enough. The fact that the arguments have not been appreciated yesterday or today does not mean that they will not be appreciated tomorrow. And it is in the name of that tomorrow that we should work with patience and devotion, incessantly proving that such option for the dialogue consolidates peace and stability of the territory we live on.

The full weight of such a dialogue is related to the fact that the area of the dialogue should gradually be broadened, as well as the sphere of concrete subjects raised through that dialogue. The dialogue must

go in a number of various directions: first and foremost, toward the western powers, European Union and the U.S.A., but also toward Russia, China, India and all other countries worldwide. The dialogue should particularly be directed to the countries of the Balkans and Central Europe, but also to the Albanians living in Kosovo and Metohija. In all those talks, it is of great importance to stick to a clear-cut political platform which has to be defined on the state level. Moreover, the dialogue should lead to the establishment of as broad consensus as possible – among the Serbian people, in Serbia in the first place but also wherever they live and work. Bearing in mind the domestic inclination to practise debates and disputes within the Serbian political community, the said consensus may sound like a matter of sheer fiction, a tendency toward its establishment should nevertheless be real. It is solely through dialogue that the fires of belligerence can be damped and the passions creatively aimed at the search for a solution which should reinforce our positions in the Balkans, Europe and worldwide. The time shall come when the belligerent passions may get a chance to be manifested purposefully; right now, they could prove detrimental rather than beneficial.

For whatever we need to do, we need a long period of peace and lasting, well-organized and patient work. During such a period, we, as a nation, have to put ourselves to test again – in order to see to what degree we are prepared for, and capable of, work within the framework of huge time spans and some historical processes of long duration; to what extent we are capable of designing a strategy for systematic, patient and well-organized activity; and, how capable we are of putting into practice such a strategy. The endeavours of the kind shall reveal to us whether we are a serious, spiritually and historically rooted European nation equal to the weight and intricacy of the tasks to be tackled. They will also show whether we are worthy of the heritage left by our ancestors and many generations which proved that we are not a great nation in number but that we *are* great in terms of the proportions of the praiseworthy historical undertakings. In that sense, the issue of Kosovo and Metohija is not just a matter of the past; it is also a matter of the future. It is one of the most significant tests we shall have to take in the way some other old – older than the Serbs – peoples, such as the Jews, could pass with success.

A Dialogue with Ourselves

That is the Serbian future we have to build *with* Kosovo and Metohija, and we have to build it with the faith in the power of dialogue. The faith in dialogue, and also the faith in the fighting spirit and

preparedness for forfeit, the faith in sacrifice and spiritual asceticism – all of that can be manifested through a peace-building dialogue understood as a metaphorical, modern and postmodern continuation of what we imply by the Vow of Kosovo. Naturally enough, the Vow of Kosovo includes much else, but this, dialogue-making/fighting and spiritual/ascetic character is something that – in the time we live in – can most easily and in the best way be grasped. In our time, the time of unstoppable globalization processes, dialogue is the sole generally acceptable way in which we can ensure whatever under some other circumstances could be ensured by wars and military exploits. Of course, we should not entirely abandon the possibility and potential necessity of this heroic/ascetic approach, but that should be preceded by a complete devotedness and adroitness in persuasion, as well as a high level of creativity and competence required in the dialogues with ourselves and with the world alike.

First and foremost, the dialogue must be maintained within the community which aspires to safeguard the idea of the Vow of Kosovo as the paramount spiritual pledge of its own survival. It is therefore quite natural that we from time to time ask ourselves: what substance and significance do we attach to Kosovo and Metohija, and to the overall mythical/historical, spiritual/religious and national/ideological meaning of that phenomenon which fundamentally determines Serbian culture. All of that also implies the necessity to develop all forms of our internal organization and preparedness – as a community with superior forms of consensus – to face even the most dangerous challenges of the kinds that affected us in the past, that are present today, and that will certainly keep reappearing in the future. The Vow of Kosovo is a powerful Serbian archetypal pattern which demonstrates that victory may bring along defeat, yet that a defeat may bear in itself the vestiges of victory; the pattern which testifies to the fact that a historic(al) time is naturally extended to the divine/eternal time; the pattern which guards the earthly realm of virtue as far as into the realm of the afterworld, seeking an all-embracing confirmation of Salvation as an act that substantiates the human and national existence and metaphysical/divine sphere of existence – alike.

In that sense, the Serbs cannot dispose of Kosovo and Metohija; if they attempted that by any chance, it would mean that they were resolved to commit collective and spiritual suicide. Likewise, if somebody invested efforts into persuading or forcing the Serbs to forget about Kosovo and Metohija and the Vow of Kosovo, it would mean that the intentions of the persuader or force-imposer are openly destructive and pernicious to the Serbs. Therefore, within the framework of the Serbo-Serbian internal dialogue about Kosovo and Metohija, we must

not dispute in a quarrelsome, lawyerly and politicizing manner, just as we must not instrumentalize the problem for some low-minded use, trivial interests and foul passions. Around the issue of Kosovo and Metohija we should activate the most serious and most sublime aspirations to understand ourselves, our own peculiarities and our prospects for dignified, spiritually sensible survival. One cannot discuss the Vow of Kosovo using language games, lies and mystifications; the most appropriate way to speak about it is the use of prayer-like words and an oath-like tone. That is why it is somewhat complicated to ascertain what is the truth in the speech regarding Kosovo and Metohija, and what is a prevarication. Nonetheless, within a broader-spanning lapse of time, it will be easy to discern “who’s the faithful one, and who’s unfaithful”.¹ Therefore, we had better not be hasty with the accusations of treason. For, Miloš Obilić was accused of betrayal, too, yet his act eliminated the accusations, depriving them of any sense. At the same time, the whole of our public must keep alert, and with reason so, in order to disallow some individuals to make decisions – on the behalf of the Serbian people – which shall put a heavier burden on the coming generations than they otherwise would have to bear. In all events, words can be – for the moment at least – abused as a means of deception, but only that which stands behind the words can provide an authoritative judgment on who is who, and what is what!

A Dialogue with Others

If a dialogue among the Serbs is necessary for the sake of a passable consensus on this extremely important issue, a dialogue with Others is necessary in order for us to get a more thoroughgoing insight into the ways in which the major powers, other nations and even the Albanians look upon Kosovo and Metohija. Our awareness of all those attitudes is important so that we can determine a realistic framework within which we can and must try to realize our pooled/national interests. Also, the said insights are indispensable for determining the right moment and the critical momentum which is favourable for us to make some crucial decisions with regard to the destiny of the Serbian nation. Unfortunately, the nearly unreserved condemnation of Serbia and the Serbian people is still the too widespread attitude expressed on the part of the western

¹ Quotation from the folk epic poem “The Prince’s Supper” (“Kneževa večera”), the segment in which – on the eve of the Battle of Kosovo – Miloš Obilić responds to Prince Lazar’s challenging toast about loyalty and betrayal. Tradition has it that Obilić slayed Sultan Murad while his rival, the Prince’s other son-in law, Vuk Branković proved a traitor. The latter is incorrect historically. The original reads: *Ko je vjera a ko je nevjera.* – *Translator’s note.*

countries (some positive changes have come to light, though), and that fact is telling us clearly that favourable momentum has not been reached yet. Therefore, our dialogue with the representatives of the state/military/scientific/cultural/media centres of the western countries should be conducted in a manner that should lead to a gradual appreciation for the argumentation and reasons on the grounds of which we might expect the Serbian truth about the Rashomon-effect interpretations of the events related to Kosovo and Metohija.

To conduct a dialogue with the world at this moment means to invest efforts in securing the elementary right of the Serbs to make their idea about their national interest pass as legitimate. We are still living in a time when the Serbs are solely expected to accept whatever is served by the western centres of state, political and military power. We live in a time when the Serbs are not recognized as respectable subjects of historical courses of events, so it is up to the Serbian intellectuals and public figures, and not Serbian politicians only, to – relying on sound argumentation and science-provided facts – confront all forms of anti-Serbian propagandist acts. For that reason, the dialogue with the world should be conducted in such a way that a depiction of the Serbian position is provided as one basically in concordance with the spirit of the time we live in; thereby, we should convince the world that the defence of Serbian interests does not imply the undermining of the reality of globalization in the contemporary world, but what it does imply is a certain success in identifying the specific/distinguishable place of the Serbian people within that global reality.

The political representatives of Serbia and the Serbian people have already achieved rather big success in maintaining dialogues with non-European major powers such as Russia, China, India and others. Our relations with those countries must be further intensified so as to gain even more outstanding support from them in the building of Serbian future. These relations must not be taken as fortified forever; it is necessary to be open-eyed in the observation of how the affairs develop and readily preempt any aggravating circumstances, while the difficulties in those relations should be converted into factors of improvement. In any case, the building of those relations is the basis whereupon a more prospective future for the Serbian people can be designed on the international/global scene. It is on that very scene that in the most recent years, it is quite evident, the Serbian state politics has discerned its great chance and possibility of efficient work.

Naturally, the greatest problems occur in Serbia's relations with the western countries, with the U.S.A. and the European Union. And, although it seems that positive changes to our advantage can hardly be accomplished, persistent activities are needed in order to alter the overall

public opinion in the western countries. The task is, in all probability, defined too seriously and too ambitiously, but it is not unrealistic to expect some major changes in that domain. Therefore, the political relations in those regions should be observed carefully and realistic frameworks for efficient action should accordingly be spotted. What should particularly be spotted are some seemingly slight differences between the U.S.A. and the European countries which offer space for wise action aimed at undermining of the extremely biased, unbalanced and basically anti-Serbian depiction of the events in the Balkans and on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Thereby, much more attention should be given to the European countries, especially Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Austria, Hungary etc., that is, to those countries where an open-minded dialogue with solid arguments has better chances to succeed. We must talk to the Europeans openly and tell them that we who are most gravely accused of crimes do not find them to be innocent in the case, and that their embarrassment before the Balkan peoples, especially before the Serbs, is expectable: for, numerous European countries readily took part in the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo and Metohija – in the name of their nations and with their military potentials. Yes, precisely so: both the United States and the European countries took part in the ethnic cleansing, thus becoming part of a joint criminal exercise liable to all legal sanctions, provided there is an authority capable of enforcing these. The fact that such an authority is lacking nowadays does not imply that their guilt is lesser or easily forgettable.

Such assessments and views should be presented with subtlety, so as not to rouse fury in the conversational partner and consequently incite the need to punish not only the ‘messenger’ for the news but also the whole nation which is the subject of the news. Some critically oriented and uncompromising intellectuals such as Noam Chomsky, Edward S. Herman, Sir Ronald Harwood, Peter Handke and many others have clearly spoken up about it. It is realistic, therefore, to expect that at least the European spirit will awaken at a certain moment and, instead of vengeful ideology, express the need to re-examine its own history and its own conscience. The constant wronging against the Serbs – and this includes the work of the Hague Tribunal² – is part of the urge to ‘launder’ the conscience; hence, psychoanalytically, the need to fully blame one/Serbian side in the conflicts proves quite understandable. That was the easiest way to ‘understand’ the all-Balkan jigsaw puzzle, and the

² The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY, 1993-2017) was the UN-founded court dealing with the crimes in the war conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Some remaining trials are now held before the Hague branch of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT). – *Translator's note.*

most effective method to realize the goals of the propaganda aimed at establishing the *a priori* guilt of the Serbs and the accomplishment of certain political objectives which implied a conspicuous elimination of the Serbian interests from the ultimate calculation. In those years, the 1990's, it was easy to implement, for the Serbs were deprived of anyone's protection worldwide. However, the situation is somewhat easier for us today. Therefore, in the time to come, and on European territory first and foremost, the Serbs have to find conversation partners possessing spiritual, intellectual and political competence, those who are ready to hear argumentation different from the one presented – with propagandist ambitions – by the advocates of the standpoint which *a priori* claims guilt of the Serbs. It may sound too harsh and too demanding, but it is absolutely true: Serbian intellectuals should help Europe find a certain measure of justice which it has, for political reasons, suppressed from its consciousness! It is the Serbian intellectuals who should help Europe establish its own speech of conscience!

Those reasons make it necessary to carefully study the state of affairs in the European Union and, generally, the western world, while decisions and political moves should be measured and harmonized with the objective assessment of the political reality in that part of the world. We must not make hasty and unfounded decisions, just as we must not provoke the western powers, for they have numberless times already demonstrated their readiness for revenge, ruthlessness and criminal acts. The Serbs should not become the target of their actions again; therefore, openness to the dialogue with those countries must be constant, distanced enough, and – in addition – extremely refined, well-measured and resolute. It is highly questionable whether the Serbian nation has the capability needed for maintaining such a dialogue successfully. However, being familiar with the astuteness of the Serbian intellectuals, I am convinced that there is hope. The goal and purpose of the dialogue should be directed toward the conclusion that the safest way – for Europe, the United States and the world on the whole – of treating the issue of Kosovo and Metohija is to keep it under the jurisdiction of the state of Serbia. However unrealistic and impracticable the goal may seem to be, it is not deprived of logic entirely and of probability partially, which means that further meticulous work should proceed in that direction.

A Dialogue with the Albanians

A dialogue with the Albanians is of special necessity, for they inhabit Kosovo and Metohija as largest in number; moreover, it is the Albanians, who have been given the gift of having the political power in that part of the Republic of Serbia – owing to the state, military and

political activities of the western countries. Naturally enough, the Albanians will not willingly participate in the dialogue, and their pugnacious attitude will last as long as they enjoy the resolved American and European protection. Following the pace of the weakening of that protection, their rejection of the dialogue will begin to soften. During this 'tug-of-war', it would be necessary for the Serbian politics to undertake some wise steps which may lead to a change in the state of affairs on the ground, i.e. in Kosovo and Metohija, as well as to a change in the attitude of the western countries to the problem.

In Serbian science – and not only in political science, cultural studies and philology – it would be necessary to undertake resolute steps toward the building of firm and reliable Albanology so as to enable us to become familiar with that people as objectively as possible, for the people has created geopolitical plans and – in coordination with the major western powers – decided to oust the Serbs from their (Serbian) 'anchorland', their parent territory, the territory which used to be the heart of the Serbian state in the Middle Ages. We should conduct the dialogue with the Albanians guided by the idea of defending freedom, truth and justice – not only for our own, Serbian people, but for all the peoples we the Serbs live with. Including the Albanians in Serbia, too, of course. Thereby, we should never defend those who on our behalf committed major crimes, but we do have to defend honourable patriots and defenders of our fatherland.

In the dialogue with the Albanians, the Serbian representatives will have to withstand many preliminary temptations. The basic mainstay should be sought in the fact that the Serbs and the Albanians have essentially different attitudes to Kosovo and Metohija. To the Serbs, Kosovo and Metohija is a sacred land, the place of landmark events in their (spiritual) history; to the Albanians, Kosovo and Metohija is a land which should be conquered and where every trace of the people which marked it spiritually/historically should be erased. Entirely in the spirit of their own history, the Albanians – to a great extent, even today – act like a kind of marauding horde of huge armies and invaders. Aware of the mandate obtained from the western powers to venture into such an invasion, the Albanians will use every more or less problematic situation for the destruction of the traces of the Serbs' presence there, first and foremost focusing on the churches, monasteries and other material heritage which testifies to the fact that this whole territory is marked by no other than the Serbian/Orthodox spirituality. Additionally, the Albanians feel urged to destroy Serbian houses and cemeteries, i.e. the testimonies to both the current and the past life of the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija. One should be proud of the fact that the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija have not demolished Albanian cemeteries and have not

been tempted to disturb the realm of the deceased members of the people which openly declares to be the Serbian enemy.

Providing evidence of what has been said above, it is necessary to constantly emphasize these objective facts: of all the republics in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Socialist Republic of Serbia was practically the only one which institutionally protected the minority communities, making by far the greatest progress – on a European scale – in that domain, for the minority rights were high above the European average at the time. Nowhere in the S.F.R. of Yugoslavia were minority rights respected to the degree practised in the S.R. of Serbia. All of the minority rights of the Albanians were guaranteed to them in the aftermath of former-Yugoslavia's disintegration, but they did not wish to recognize the Republic of Serbia and to begin to exercise the rights ensured for them. They persistently stood outside the political system (refusing to take part in the population census and in the democratic political system); what is more, they organized a terrorist movement, the KLA,³ in order to deny the state, on whose territory they began to create a state-within-a-state. The Serbian authorities completely ignored the Albanian boycott of the whole sociopolitical system, probably disbelieving that the western creators of political crises and of the methods of military interventionism would be ready to so transparently involve themselves in the affairs on the territory of Southeastern Europe, i.e. in the Balkans. However, once the kind and form of William Walker's⁴ activities were keyed out, and when Richard Holbrooke⁵ took off his shoes upon the entrance into a house of the Albanian terrorists, it dawned on everyone that the leading role in the production of the crisis in Serbia was played by the United States – strategically and logistically at first, and later in terms of NATO's military effectiveness; the leading European countries followed immediately in its wake. Those are facts we nowadays have to live with and overcome them somehow.

³ The abbreviation **KLA** stands for 'Kosovo Liberation Army'; in Serbian, it is called *Oslobodilačka vojska Kosova (OVK)*, and in Albanian the name reads *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës (UÇK)*. – *Translator's note.*

⁴ **William Graham Walker** (b. 1935) is a veteran U.S. Foreign Service diplomat who served as the head of the Kosovo Verification Mission established by OESC. His 1998 and 1999 activities and reports influenced the public opinion abroad in favour of launching a war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). When 45 bodies of Albanians were discovered in the village of Račak, he "accused Serbian security forces for killing them, without presenting any evidence – although it was never determined whether the victims were in fact civilians" [source: Tanjug Press Agency]. The Serbian side claims that those were the bodies of Albanian terrorists. – *Translator's note.*

⁵ **Richard Charles Albert Holbrooke** (1941-2010) was a long-serving American diplomat. Upon leaving the State Department, he became a special envoy to Cyprus and the Balkans as a private citizen. – *Translator's note.*

For, the rule applied in the cases of all other republics of the former S.F.R. of Yugoslavia was the one of the inviolability of borders – all but Serbia. In the case of Serbia, another scenario had been designed: further tearing apart of the state's integrity, while for the NATO strategists it was not quite certain whether the separation of Kosovo and Metohija would suffice as the solution. For all of the states derived from the S.F.R. of Yugoslavia, a certain right was ensured of discriminating some peoples and minorities, even of open ethnic cleansing (the Serbs have been cleansed ethnically in Croatia and in Kosovo and Metohija, and exposed to straightforward discrimination in Slovenia and Montenegro for instance); for Serbia solely such a right was not ensured. Contrariwise, the Albanian people were kept under preparation for an armed insurrection without any previous attempt on their part to take advantage of their constitutional right to get organized within the existing political system. All of the former republics (with the forced exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina) have been allowed on the access road to Europe in their full state capacity, but Serbia has been fettered through the violation of its borders. The road to Europe was designed as the stabilisation of the situation and as an unambiguous reward for all – except for the Serbs whose entry into Europe implied a punishment which we should have accepted with anaesthetic peacefulness and, moreover, with thankfulness. That is why the sole logical stance is the one of refusal to accept such an – American and West European – idea of peace; that is the stance of perpetual calling into question, demystifying and deconstructing such an idea – resorting to reason, resourcefulness and persistence. That is a job which must be entrusted to completely prepared and equipped persons. The Serbs have been deprived of justice in Europe, yet Europe is nonetheless the space which offers hope for the story about deprivation of justice to be understood and brought within the 'awareness of jurisprudence'. That is why the Serbs should not keep quiet but should uncompromisingly enter the stage of dialogue. Provided, of course, one important condition is fulfilled: the protagonists of the dialogue must be seriously prepared with regard to both historical/political facts and relevant scientific insights of other kinds, including rhetorical skill.

*Sustaining the People and Preserving
the National Resources*

One of our primary tasks in Kosmet must be aimed at the survival of all people who currently live and work there. Much has been done in order to prevent further out-migration and set prospects for our people for survival in dignity in that unstable land. However, I have

the impression that good solutions to some problems are often at hand but for some reason they stay beyond our reach. In October 2017, I attended a scholarly gathering dealing with the folklore expert and once Russian consul in Prizren Ivan Yastrebov. The conference, held at the Prizren Seminary and in Velika Hoča, was organized by Professor Dr. Valentina Pitulić, folklorist, scholar, poet and cultural expert. During my stay at Velika Hoča, in the area of great tradition in viticulture and winemaking since the Middle Ages, I saw the difficulties which the inhabitants of this ancient appendage of the monastery of Chilandar have to face. It seems to me that in this very place, at Velika Hoča, and the nearby Orahovac which should be included, at least three useful things could be done. First, we could more frequently organize excursions and stay in the two villages. If – instead of one or two groups that visit Velika Hoča monthly – there were some dozen or fifteen, the industrious locals would sell their wine more easily and thus feel some economic improvement in their lives. Second, the distribution of the wines from Hoča and Orahovac should be organized on Serbia's market, along with the provision of systematic assistance to the winemakers in an improvement of their production, transportation and selling of the goods. Third, Velika Hoča could gradually be turned into a museum-village, an ethnologically attractive setting or the like, so that life there – supported by successful growth of tourism – could be maintained with more safety and higher intensity than has been the case thus far.

Much could be done following such a model of extra engagement. That is evidenced by those institutions in Kosovo and Metohija which have demonstrated great efforts in the field of culture. The example of the Priština Theatre is fascinating: in the past, it maintained a project which included performances in people's households and courtyards so as to reach the reduced number of the Serbs living in communities that count no more than several people. For these people, the actors were willing to perform in special, completely irregular conditions, offering proof that art can above all live in places where people who foster art live. In a very special way, this is testified to by the cultural events around the monastery of Gračanica during the *Vidovdan*⁶ cultural fes-

⁶ **Vidovdan** (St. Vitus' Day) is a Serbian religious and, since recently, national holiday, celebrated on June 28 (June 15 in Julian calendar, the official calendar of the Serbian Orthodox Church). Moreover, it is the feast day commemorating Holy Great Martyr Prince Lazar and the Holy Serbian Martyrs fallen in the Battle of Kosovo (1389). In Serbian culture and history it is much more than a religious holiday, for on June 28 a number of fateful events took place in the past, the most outstanding being the Assassination in Sarajevo (1914); the Treaty of Versailles (1919) and the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes later renamed as Kingdom of Yugoslavia; the Cominform Resolution (1948) and expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Eastern bloc. – *Translator's note.*

tivities and the outstandingly active Cultural Centre in this Serbian stronghold, as well as the poets' and painters' colony at Zvečan, etc. It is important to demonstrate that artistic/creative spirit can survive despite all the unfavourable elements of the living conditions there in general.

Provided we venture into such a quite practical mode of problem-solving, we could – over time, with patience and devotion – accomplish something more comprehensive and effective. Is there something which prevents us from starting to gradually and persistently replenish the Serbian human, cultural and economic potentials in Kosovo and Metohija? If so, we should ask ourselves whether the obstacles can be overcome and surmounted in the way the people prepared for valour do. If the answer to such questions is negative, it would mean that what prevents us from tackling that kind of task is our own indolence and lack of organized work, perhaps even general negligence and lethargy concerning everything but personal interest and profit-gaining. If the answer to the questions is affirmative, it would open far brighter horizons, filled with optimism and boldness capable of utter denial of the claims launched by all those idlers who keep saying that we, the Serbs, have no idea of what to do with Kosovo even if someone gave it back to us.

Therefore, let us show everybody, including ourselves, that we do know how to handle the issue of Kosovo and Metohija, and that we do know the way in which our right to that mythic/historic territory can be regained. That is the reason why such endeavours need the involvement of young and competent individuals, people with ideals who are ready to assert themselves and even make sacrifices for the sake of some higher purposes. If we complete such comparably light tasks with success, we could with greater power and argumentation raise the issue of the national resources such as mines, electrical power installations, factories, hotels, holiday hostels, arable land, forests, pasturelands, etc. We must defend all those national resources to the extent they are actually defendable, but what follows immediately is their exploitation to the benefit of our fellow-countrymen in Kosovo and Metohija. That is, we must realize that Kosovo and Metohija are not lost for us as long as we do not lose them in our souls.

Preservation and Fostering of Cultural Heritage

The Serbian cultural heritage is certainly among the greatest valuables in Kosovo and Metohija; what is more, of the Serbian heritage on the whole that part is also the most precious one. The Albanians have hardly established any of theirs, while the Islamic cultural heritage is first and foremost of Turkish and not Albanian provenance. These facts

must be taken advantage of – not only with regard to the preservation of Serbian spiritual life in Kosmet but also to the preservation of the human potential and state prerogatives which have to remain Serbian on the territory marked by these – Serbian – cultural values. The nation which boasts the monuments such as the monasteries/churches of Dečani, Gračanica, the Patriarchate of Peć, Mother of God Ljeviška, Holy Archangels, Devič, Banjska and others, has in the past evidenced its high creativity and it should, naturally enough, manifest and demonstrate now that the right to govern Kosovo and Metohija has to be regained.

What also awaits us is resisting all the attempts at presenting the overall cultural heritage as something different from the exclusively *Serbian* cultural heritage. In that respect, no pusillanimous compromise can be made, for the logic of a people which moves through history like a horde implies that whatever is seized by violence is considered the property of the invader. Hence their efforts to talk about the said heritage as the heritage of Kosovo and not of the Serbs; the next step would be a demand to take the attribute *kosovski* ('of/in Kosovo') as meaning 'the property of the people who prevailingly inhabit the area'. That is why the task of highest priority for the Serbian cultural policy must be fostering/safeguarding of all those threatened valu(abl)es, including an overall project of restoring, conserving and reconstructing all the major buildings/monuments. Such an enterprise must not be given over to the Albanians; pre-emptively, steps should be taken which enable our church dignitaries and priesthood, conservation experts and art historians to provide and maintain 'home care' for what belongs to the Serbian culture.

In order to achieve success in these efforts, all those towns and villages have to be – to a larger degree than nowadays – the 'fountains' of inextinguishable and eventful life of the Serbs. Apart from the rather small number of people who reside in the monasteries and churches or frequent these, it is necessary that every living Serb sets the task for himself/herself to – whenever possible, alone or with friends – visit the holy places and contribute to their preservation both in the material world and in the culture of memory. For that reason, it would be important to erect hotels and lodges in those places or in their vicinity, so that the natives of Kosovo could develop their own economy which could prove profit-making and supportive for their survival in the "deadly place" where one has "to endure".⁷ Such hotels and services for tourists should be designed as small oases where life could go on

⁷ The author refers to the often-quoted line from the folk epic poem "Old Man Novak and Headman Bogosav" ("Starina Novak i knez Bogosav"), where the hero, an old haiduk, accounts for his decision to fight as an outlaw against the Turkish atrocities despite his old age, ending with the following words: "And I'm still able to strike and run away / And endure in any deadly place; / Fearing no one but Almighty God." – *Translator's note*.

and progress gradually. There is an impressive fact related to the Prizren Seminary which has managed to return to the place of its foundation and long-lived tradition; this splendid example offers an excellent formula for a much broader and more comprehensive story about the renewal of the Serbs' life in Kosovo and Metohija.

Return to Kosovo and Metohija

In all those endeavours, the Serbian Orthodox Church, i.e. its Diocese of Raška-Prizren, should play the role of greatest significance possible. Like in the times when the Patriarchate of Peć had its place under the Ottoman Empire, or those when the Metropolitan Bishopric of Karlovci had its place in the Austrian Empire, we the Serbs are repeatedly facing troublesome historical circumstances in which our Church must substitute for the missing state. Replacing the 'absent' state, the said Diocese has so far developed many roles and activities which would normally be the duty of someone else; as the objective of such engagement is the survival of the people there, i.e. the congregations, it has all been part of the mission of safeguarding the Church in Kosovo and Metohija and the people/believers. I assume that the non-believers have already gone in search of safe havens, while only those have stayed who have religious faith and deeply believe in God's wonderwork and the mercy from Heaven one has to deserve. The Serbs and the Serbian Orthodox Church have had great experience of the kind, too; studying their own history they could easily find useful formulas needed for a happy outcome of the struggle for survival. Thus, when the Vow of Kosovo and the Vow of Karlovci merge, they will become a fountain of spiritual strength which should not surrender before any difficulties the Serbian people can and must face on their spiritual-historical path.

Accordingly, what should be activated in Kosovo and Metohija in addition to the resources related to the tourist facilities as the grounds for a renewal of the Serbs' life there, are the potentials involving land property. In that respect, the Serbian Orthodox Church must get full restitution and a privileged status by all means – regardless of which legal or political authority is established on that territory. The church estate, along with any other land property that could be (re)exploited under certain conditions, has to be utilized in order to restore the life of the Serbs. Practically, that means that organizing various forms of cooperative associations/communities should be gradually implemented on arable land, pastureland and woodland. In the Serbian culture, co-operatives have in a variety of forms played an important role (*zadruga* – joint family households and cooperatives of agricultural producers);

therefore, the experience should be put into practice for the purpose of the reconstruction of Kosovo and Metohija. In other words, *rest is not what we can have as long as reconstruction's underway*.⁸ The reconstruction activities may involve not only the locals but also people who would occasionally come to work there, whether as hired workforce or work drive participants, on voluntary or help-giving basis, or whatever mode applicable. What is important is that in all those places serious, household- or co-op-like work and order is established, one that would ensure survival and improvement of living conditions not to individuals only but also to whole families. In that way, the survival of our people there can be ensured.

In addition to relying on the experiences of our joint family households and co-ops, it would be very useful to deeply and carefully study the experience of the traditional Jewish *kibbutz* as a contemporary way of organizing not only life and work in the community, but also taking precaution measures with regard to military, terrorist or police violence. A Serbian *zadruga* in Kosovo would have to display a high degree of not only internal cohesion but also of organization which can ensure lasting efficiency of that kind of collective life. If this could be accompanied by successful distribution of all their produce on the Serbian and other markets, the whole project would show numerous advantages and positive effects. For instance, if the production of nuts (hazelnut, walnut, chestnut, almond and the like), or of grapes and wine, or of plums, and the processing of these (prunes, jams, brandies etc.) were well/organized, products would be made which could successfully get to the market at good prices. Naturally enough, these kinds of communities cannot work without the forms of organizations that are monastic or half-military in style. Moreover, the whole economic chain (banking, commerce, shipping etc.) from all Serbian territories must be involved, and a high degree of solidarity is needed of all working people who are capable of assisting. *Zadruga* are a great chance for the renewal of the Serbs' life in Kosmet, but they can only survive if all Serbs – wherever they live and work – come to feel about this project as a mission of their own.

Preserving 'the Culture of the Mind'

As long as our work on renewing the life of the Serbs in Kosmet is underway, we have to keep investing efforts into reasoning as clearly and realistically as possible, yet with a necessary degree of idealism without which life is deprived of any sense. It is therefore important

⁸ The slogan *Nema odmora dok traje obnova!* was launched and used in the post-second-world-war period when youth labour actions were organized in order to (re)build infrastructure facilities such as roads, train tracks, public buildings etc. – *Translator's note.*

that – paradoxically – we are as much realistic as possible and as much idealistic as possible; as much down-to-earth as possible and as high-minded as possible. And to be that in a manner of purity of mind and feeling the magical divine energy manifested through the material world. Aspiring to reason with pureness and always care about respectable culture of the intellect, we should ceaselessly keep in our mind that, in its war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, NATO violated some of the most fundamental principles of international law, yet bring ourselves (despite all the counterpropaganda and the real threats one can face) to conclude that NATO is one of the greatest criminal organizations in the world today. It is also necessary to openly admit that in this imposed war against that criminal organization we lost (no other outcome was possible), and that Kosovo and Metohija were occupied just as they had been occupied in 1389 and over the years/decades thereafter. In 1999, we unwillingly faced a ‘New Battle of Kosovo’ – against a force which refused to face its own crimes. A battle at Kosovo was lost again, but in a more than honourable way and through some heroic deeds which should be remembered in the times to come. It had taken 610 years exactly before Our Lord told us again that we lost something of greatest sacredness and that a long-lasting, perhaps age-long struggle awaits us before the greatest sanctity is regained somehow.

Side by side with that clarity of reasoning, some additional qualities and information should stand, those we must not overlook, such as the warning written by Noam Chomsky long ago, in his book *Novi militaristički humanizam* (translated by Lidija Kljakić, published by “Filip Višnjić” Co., Belgrade, 2000), the writing of which was triggered by NATO’s war against the F.R. of Yugoslavia, which reads: “The U.S. ratifies few enabling conventions concerning human rights and related matters, and these few are conditioned by reservations that render them (effectively) inapplicable to the United States.” Extreme caution is necessary when dealing with such jurisdictions in power that commit violence worldwide while naming their acts “humanitarian interventions” and not feeling obliged to respect international law at an elementary level, that is, with that kind of criminal organizations and joint criminal enterprises. The more so because, as Chomsky testifies, “the U.S. had indeed ratified the Genocide Convention, after a very long delay, but with a reservation that ‘the specific consent of the United States is required’ if charges are brought against it.” Which means that “U.S. ratification of the Convention was conditioned on its inapplicability to the United States.” (All quotations [in Serbian] from *op.cit.*, p. 182).⁹

⁹ The excerpts from the original taken over from Noam Chomsky: *The New Military Humanism: Lessons from Kosovo*, Pluto Press, London, 1999, p. 153, via <https://books.google.rs/books>.

To wage a war against such a country, not to mention the whole alliance of similarly profiled states, makes no sense, as it is an utterly suicidal venture; hence the necessity to find whatever different solution is possible in order to escape such a development of affairs.

In the aftermath of the war lost against such states, it does not take too fertile an imagination to think about all those powers relying on their potential, in terms of influence and money, to discretely debauch or directly bribe many politicians, intellectuals and business people obliging them to cause additional chaos in the minds of the survivors and intimidated people. The task of these postmodern janissaries is to eliminate pure and clear thinking so that multitudes of half-truths and obvious untruths come to be proclaimed undeniable truths. The psychological/propaganda war is no less shattering than an open military operation.

In this time gone astray, spiritless people mostly employ their minds on a day-to-day basis; thus, when you suggest anything that implies activities which take decades or even centuries, they will stare at you as if you had dropped from the moon. Such a misunderstanding between two substantially different 'brain types' is not easy to dispel: in the future, whoever speaks up with an idea of broader time spans will be labeled an out-of-date, retrograde incident which hinders the globalization processes, and therefore defined as a legitimate target of uncompromising clash. Of course, this mode of clash started by the promoters of globalist-mindedness against the champions of traditional spirituality will never be made public; contrariwise, it will on the basis of secret lists be implemented by making such individuals fair game that undergoes discreet elimination from public life. With these kinds of people, those who are incapable of thinking beyond their own bodies and their personal/individual lives, the others – the people who cherish some higher spiritual horizons – cannot come to any serious agreement. We have to live with those people deprived of spiritual views as if we did not notice their hard intellectual handicap, but we first and foremost have to understand that they are special needs persons, intellectually, who require assistance yet whose feeble hands should by no means hold the fateful issues of the whole community. And this sobriety on our part must be a matter of elementary culture of the intellect and not one of an organized ideological or political action.

It is within that context that a solution will be sought for the issue of preserving the Christian spirit or of the opposite attempt at its total destruction and elimination from the world's consciousness. If we manage to preserve the spirit of Christianity among the Serbian people, what has been said above in the form of a series of proposals could prove practicable in reality. On the other hand, if the spirit of Christianity gets lost in the chaos of the globalized world, the world which challenges

all values apart from the market which integrates all differences – nothing will be possible to do about it. And the sole true answer to the reality of globalization lies in our faith in the Lord and in the fairness of the world as the highest of values, the values which cannot be marketed, for there is no price set for them: they are priceless treasures of human life and the life of whole peoples/nations, and those treasures are not tradable for all the world. Those who treasure such values in themselves will be able to work wonders; to those without such values in themselves, the smallest things and events of man's everyday life will become strange and inconceivable.

Being Prepared for Long-Lasting Processes

Naturally enough, the problem of Kosovo and Metohija cannot be solved easily and quickly. The problem dates from ancient time – the one of the Battle of Kosovo [1389] – and has been acute ever since the establishment of the Prizren League in 1878 at least; it was then that the Albanian strategy was articulated of anti-Serbian actions and of gaining the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, and beyond. In the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later renamed as Yugoslavia), the problem was thought to be solvable by the deployment of military/police force. That is why the conflicts in Kosovo and Metohija were permanent, varying in intensity. During the socialist period, the centres of Communist authorities were exaggeratedly oriented toward neutralisation of the force of the Serbian national consciousness; they quite benevolently watched the nationalism of the Albanians as a younger and minority people manifesting itself with increasing openness. In the mid-1960's, active ethnic cleansing of the Serbs began, and they were driven out of their agelong homes. In the socialist Yugoslavia, those who were ready to understand the measures proposed by Serbia's leadership in order to solve the problem of ethnic cleansing of the Serbs at Kosovo and Metohija were but few. It was getting clear that the international actors from the West propitiatingly viewed the weakening of Serbia within Yugoslavia; at the same time, the isolation of the Serbs was increasing within the international constellation of dialogues that concerned not only the problem of Kosovo and Metohija but also the problem of the general position of the Serbs and, especially, of Serbia as a state.

This lack of understanding for the Serbian position was by no means accidental, and it has been obvious for a very long time. As early as in 1844, Ilija Garašanin¹⁰ wrote in *Načertanije* ('The Draft'):

¹⁰ **Ilija Garašanin** (1812–1874) was a prominent politician and statesman in the Principality of Serbia who served as Interior Minister (1843–52) and Prime Minister (1861–7).

“The new Serbian state in the South would give full guarantees to Europe that it will be an excellent and strong country, capable of survival between Austria and Russia. The geographical position of the state, the area of its territory, its natural resources and the military spirit of its population, as well as an exalted and fervent sense of national identity, the same origin, one and the same language – all of that indicates its stability and great future.” (See: „Garašaninovo Načertanije” in: Radoš Ljušić, *Knjiga o Načertaniju* [A Book on “The Draft”], Beletra, Belgrade 2004, p. 191). Yet until the present day, Serbia has not managed to convince to a substantial degree its western partners (Austria once and the European Union today) that it deserves essential trust in terms of statehood and politics, or even support. Such trust would occur to some (limited) extent now and then, mostly in the aftermath of heavy wartime losses (e.g. after the First and Second World Wars), when the leaders of the authorities (Crown Prince Aleksandar Karadjordjević in 1918 and Josip Broz in 1945) were mandated to regulate the political scene in the state. What appeared to be the most fruitful model for the relations with the western centres of power was the one which enabled the representatives of Serbia to demonstrate that close relations with these were desirable, though not of decisive importance for the country’s destiny. A reserved stance contributes to the stabilization of those relations most, but the stance can most efficiently be implemented if the state of Serbia resorts to a large number of different/alternative sources of stabilizing its own social and political situation. The part to be taken by Russian and major non-European powers (China, India and others) should in that stabilization process be of as great significance as possible.

The issue of Kosovo and Metohija is not one that can be settled and, as such, entirely closed within the foreseeable future. When this critical issue was raised in its full drama which even led to the 1999 war of NATO against the F.R. of Yugoslavia, the western powers acted with such utmost dramatics, creating a situation which cannot be overcome for a long time to come. Had they wanted to solve the problem lastingly, the western powers would not have opted for war, for the option only multiplied the problems and made them more dramatic. That is, they did not work toward a settlement. Obviously, the strategists of the United States and NATO need some lasting, open, and bleeding wounds on Europe’s body. For that is the only way to keep Europe under constant pressure, which shall prevent it from realistic contemplation of its own interests and from the attempts at some additional types of integration, other than Euro-Atlantic ones.

Concerning the issue of Kosovo and Metohija, the Serbian party should therefore – for tactical reasons – display a certain enthusiasm

in the search for ultimate solutions; however, it is not realistic to expect such a solution. Neither is it possible without a heavy defeat of the Serbian people. If anything serious is done under the current circumstances, it can only be detrimental to the Serbian cause. Therefore, fellow-Serbs, let us arm ourselves with patience and let us not expect too much! In this situation, it would be of utter importance to build up a more lasting strategy of empowering the Serbian component in Kosovo and Metohija: As long as talks about a permanent solution to the issue is underway, that strategy has to be borne in our minds, unexposed to discussion in public yet carried out in silence! When we accomplish that, and once these matters become a routine *conditio sine qua non* in the sphere of the Serbian elementary culture of the mind, the visibility of those who act harmfully for the Serbian interests will be easy to notice. That is exactly why it is necessary to patiently build and complete the consensus on the issue of Kosovo and Metohija. Namely, we speak about a consensus which should ensure the general survival of the Serbian people – in dignity. For that reason, what we are solving in Kosovo and Metohija today is not just a minor, isolated question of the Serbian territory, but a huge one, one of the greatest issues of all-embracing Serbian spiritual maturity and its endurance in the times to come. For, whatever the short-term ‘settlement’ of the issue is arrived at, we shall still have to work on a long-term one – for a long time!

Translated from Serbian by
Angelina Čanković Popović

SRĐAN ŠLJUKIĆ

KOSOVO AS SACRED LAND AND THE SOURCE OF THE MYTHS THAT CONSTITUTE THE SERBIAN IDENTITY

One can speak about Serbia's province of Kosovo and Metohija from a number of angles: political, economic, geopolitical, etc. One of the possible angles is the one of culture. Thereby, culture should be considered to be one of the three constitutive parts of a society – besides economy and politics – and by no means some unimportant 'remainder' the society could do without. Simply, there is no human society without culture.

In this discourse I intend to survey two issues which I find to be essential when the cultural aspects of the problem of Kosovo and Metohija are in question, and the two are closely related mutually: Kosovo as the Serbs' sacred land and Kosovo as the source of myths which constitute the Serbian identity.

Kosovo as the Serbs' Sacred Land

The claim that the argument of "sacred land" cannot be used in the current rational talks about Kosovo is, in essence, false and calculated to knock the bottom out of the Serbian side's chief means to articulate its position. The said claim departs from a total equation of modernity with an absolute social secularism which actually does not exist anywhere. What is sacred is human to the same degree as the profane. In other words, the sacred is anthropological in character and cannot ascribed to pre-modern societies only.

Culture completely overspreads the human physical space, i.e. territory. However, not all the parts of a territory inhabited by a particular people/nation have always the same cultural significance. What

we take to be spaces of special cultural significance are the territories where important historical events took place (such as battles which decided the future), and the places where martyrs were buried, that is, the places which are sources of crucial identity-building myths related to a particular social group (ethnic group, nation and the like). The maximum intensity of the cultural significance of some particular space/territory is reached by its sanctification, more precisely, by its metamorphosis into a *holy land* (in the sense of making difference between the sacred and the profane as the essence of the religious, according to Durkheim). In the spaces taken as sacred, the earthly and heavenly, the human and the divine, meet. They fulfil three functions: first, they are places of communication with divinity through prayer or in another way; second, those are places of divine presence in which salvation, success and healing are promised; third, they provide meaning to the faithful by metaphorically reflecting the actual order of the world.¹ What is here considered the world is the whole territory inhabited by a nation, referred to as fatherland or homeland, or some of its particular part that of special importance culturally. In one of the types of sacred land, the territory settled by a nation is felt to be the *promised land*, i.e. land promised by God to the group in question. The best-known case of the kind refers to the Jews and the land of Canaan which God had promised to Abraham and Moses. The Jewish promised land has two aspects / material and spiritual. The former implies the promised land of “milk and honey” to the Jews, wandering after they had gained freedom from the slavery in Egypt, and the latter implies the demand for the creation of a *holy community* following the rules of God. The two aspects are mutually related to their utmost, for the former cannot become real unless the other is present as well.² Another well-known case is the notion of North America as a promised land, as thought of by the colonists/Protestants who had arrived on this continent from England. They felt America was an ‘American Israel’, or ‘New England Jerusalem’. They looked upon the indigenous people as pagan and uncivilized tribes whose banishment and even extermination were seen as the ‘purification’ of the holy land from Satan’s influence. That attitude played an important role in the westbound expansion of the U.S.A. as far as the Pacific coast.³ In the eyes of the Afrikaaners, South Africa

¹ Hassner, R.E. (2003). “‘To Halve and to Hold’: Conflict over Sacred Space and the Problem of Indivisibility”. *Security Studies* 12, no. 4: 1–33.

² Smith, A.D. (2008). *Chosen Peoples. Sacred Sources of National Identity*. Oxford University Press.

³ See: Smith, A.D., *op. cit.*; Hughes, R.T. (2004). *Myths America Lives By*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press; Gavrilović, D. (2006). *Udari sudbine [The Strikes of Destiny]*. Novi Sad: Stylos.

was the promised land of freedom, also compared to the holy Jewish land of Canaan.⁴

It would be extremely difficult to find a nation which does not sanctify in some way the territory it considers its native land, “the land of [its] ancestors”, thus giving it the highest place in its hierarchy of values.

Particular parts of national territory can also be taken as sacred or of special significance. Thus, it is the Alps seen as the “National Redoubt” that are for the Swiss of special significance and the ‘birth place’ of the Swiss independence; for the Armenians, it is Mount Ararat, for the Serbs – Kosovo and Metohija, for the Afrikaaners – the Blood River, for Korea (both North and South) – Paektu Mountain,⁵ for the Romanians – the Carpathians. The views have (in most cases yet not necessarily) much to do with the places where fatal battles for the respective peoples/nations took place, those where the bones of their martyrs rest. Such territories cannot be taken as sheer physical space, but a special space in terms of culture. Moreover, it has to be emphasized that the cultural importance of such a space cannot be transferred to another place. In other words, such a space is unique and any ‘trading’ with it is out of question.

When a conflict breaks out over some territories of special cultural significance, such a conflict displays some features which make it differ from other territorial conflicts. As a rule, such conflicts are more intense, longer-lasting and more difficult to settle. A.D. Smith, the British researcher dealing with nations as cultural creations, concludes that, if territories are taken as sacred, there is “readiness to defend them to the last inch” and “at all costs”; also, in an enormous cultural significance of a stretch of space lie “the roots of some of the most bitter and protracted ethnic conflicts”.⁶

Regardless of the fact that numerous areas inhabited by the Serbs bear special cultural significance, there is no doubt that for the Serbs – Kosovo is their *holy land*. It is the place of the medieval clash (the 1389 Battle of Kosovo) decisive for the destiny of the Serbs; it is a place where the remains of the Serbian martyrs rest, the martyrs who are the model to be followed by all the generations to come; it has been sanctified and for the Serbs turned into a *holy land*. That Smith does realize the fact can be seen from his statement that “the Serbs look on the

⁴ Smith, A.D., *op. cit.*

⁵ See: Smith, A.D., *op. cit.*; Smith, A.D. (1999). *Myths and Memories of the Nation*. Oxford University Press; Pinilla, D.G. (2004). “Border Disputes between China and North Korea”. *China Perspectives* 52 (March–April), <http://chinaperspectives.revues.org/806>, accessed November 15, 2017.

⁶ Smith, A.D. (1999). *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 155.

province of Kossovo as the original heartland of the Serb people, which can on no account be surrendered to its Albanian majority. (...) This is still a place of pilgrimage for Serbs, just as the epic ballads of Kossovo and their hero, Marko, continue to hold a special place in Serb hearts”.⁷

As can be seen, numerous nations have a sacred land of their own; we are by no means exceptional. So why could we not resort to that argument in our negotiations over the issue of Kosovo and Metohija? There is but one answer: because the enemies of the Serbs do not want it. By their resolute insistence on the ostensible irrationality and pre-modern character of the sacred space, efforts are invested into preventing the Serbian side from taking advantage of its crucial arguments, which results in a considerable weakening of Serbia’s position as negotiator.

*Kosovo as the Source of Myths which Constitute
the Serbian Identity*

That Kosovo as the Serbian sacred land and at the same time (and just because of that) the source of the major Serbian myths – should not be a matter of dispute for anyone. However, we have for a long time been hearing the ‘advice’ and warnings suggesting that we should get rid of our myths and forget about them, that we should “demythologize” ourselves and “be rational” where Kosovo is concerned. Such ‘advice’ is grounded on the premise that myths are some kind of fantasies, imaginative tales unconnected to social reality, elements of culture which belong to the past solely and hence misplaced in the contemporary world. There is nothing farther from truth. Such attitudes have no grounds in social science, but only in the so-called ‘common sense’ which ‘sees no further than the end of its nose’. If we wish to remain within the framework of science, we have to get familiar with the notion of myth which has left the deepest imprint in anthropology and sociology – the one advocated by the British anthropologist of Polish origin Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942). To Malinowski, in a particular society/culture, myth plays a series of exceptionally important roles, and he therefore defines it in this way: “Myth, in fact, is not an idle rhapsody, not an aimless outpouring of vain imaginings, but a hard-working, extremely important cultural force.”⁸

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Malinowski B. (1971). *Mit, nauka i religija*. Beograd: Prosveta, 91. [English quotations, here and elsewhere in this text, except the one linked to footnote 10, taken over from: Malinowski, Bronislaw: “The Role of Myth in Life” in: Dundes, Alan, ed., *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*, University of California Press, 1984, pp. 193–206. – *Translator’s note*. This quotation: p. 196]

Myth is (re)told in order to satisfy religious and moral needs, to invigorate the existing social relations, to meet some practical demands: "Myth fulfils (...) an indispensable function: it expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules (...). Myth is thus a vital ingredient of human civilization; it is not an idle tale but a hard-worked active force; it is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imagery, but a pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom".⁹ As a statement of primeval reality, myth supplies a retrospective pattern of moral values and sociological order. According to Malinowski, myth fulfils a function *sui generis*, and – strengthening tradition and stressing its importance – fulfils it in order to ensure the continuity of culture.

One of the postulates in Malinowski's theory of myth is that myth is "an indispensable ingredient of all culture. It is (...) constantly regenerated; every historical change creates its mythology, which is, however, but indirectly related to historical fact."¹⁰ In other words, myth is constantly re/produced anew because, above all, it performs functions that are necessary in every community and every culture: religion requires the existence of miracles, and the differences in social status need a precedent, while morals have to be reconfirmed.

In keeping with the views of B. Malinowski, as well as of some other anthropologists and sociologists, we can derive several conclusions about myth in the social sense. These conclusions are presented below.¹¹

First, the very word 'myth', when used in everyday communication and in the political jargon, most often has a pronouncedly negative connotation. Such an attitude to myth originates from the Age of Enlightenment, when the power of reason seemed to be able to 'dispel' myths and drive them out from the society and into literary writings. Here, myth was taken as sheer fantasy, in contradiction to reality – natural and social alike. Of course, the scientific study of myths must not get entrapped in the opinion about myth as a 'negative phenomenon' which should be eliminated from social life, for it will not lead to the desired scientific cognitions about myth. Contrariwise, it would lead to the

⁹ *Op. cit.*, 94. [Original, p. 199.]

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, 126–127. [This quotation taken over from: "Myth in Primitive Psychology" in: Strenski, Ivan, ed.: *Malinowski and the Work of Myth*, Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 115 – *Translator's note*.] Malinowski particularly underlines that anthropology should not be limited to the study of primitive man's lifestyle from the standpoint of our culture, but also the study of our own culture from the perspective of the Stone Age man. Such a view of ourselves "from a distance" shall enable us to better understand our own institutions, beliefs and customs.

¹¹ Here we mostly refer to: Šljukić, S. (2011). *Mit kao sudbina* [Myth as Destiny]. Sremski Karlovci: Kairos.

substitution of science with ideology and/or another myth. Myth must be approached – in terms of validity – in a neutral manner, to the greatest extent possible in humanities.

Second, myth is a kind of belief and therefore resembles religion to which it is closely bonded (yet the bond is not necessary, for there are secular myths as well). Myth is a certain social force, for it fulfils some social functions. That is why the truth of myth can hardly be measured by scientific criteria: myth is accepted for its usefulness, for its practical significance and function, and not for its truthfulness or ‘scientific accuracy’. In primitive communities, the omnipresent myth is transformed into a traditional one, while in modern societies – due to the accelerating development of rational thought – it withdraws from some social spheres, yet not because of its untruthfulness but because of the lack of its practicality and effectiveness.

Third, the main social functions of myth – equally important in all human communities – are to create and maintain social solidarity and identity (Durkheim), as well as to lend legitimacy to the social institutions and structures, moral rules and community practices (Malinowski). In other words, each community has the need for myths. Myth is inherent to every culture understood as the lifestyle of a particular social group. What derives from what has been said is that there is no community without its myths and that the idea of modern society as a society free from myths is but yet another myth. All societies of the present day – no matter how much some of them may resist the hypothesis that they, too, have myths of their own – have the need for myths and myths themselves.

Fourth, as a product of culture, myth is subject to change, change through history and change in relation to various societies. Myths come into being, suffer transformations and vanish; the main reasons for the processes are practical, actually social/functional in nature. One and the same myth can be interpreted in different ways within different historical periods; two different societies may share one myth, and the like.

Fifth, in times of social conflicts (wars especially), the role of myths (particularly some kinds of these) in a community grows, for the simple reason that a conflict is a social situation in which the needs for social solidarity, identity and assertion of social institutions are in practice more pronounced than in times of relative peace. During wartime, myths may sometimes ‘run wild’ and reach previously unthinkable degree of social influence, taking unexpected (even completely unbelievable) forms. Their obvious incompatibility with the factuality often repels intellectuals, for to a great many of them to accept those/such myths looks like betrayal of reason. Thereby, intellectuals are baffled by the effectivity of myths with the major part of the members of a certain

community, while at the same time they remain unaware of their own belief in (some other) myths.

Myths are part of the lasting basis for ethnic/national identities. There is not one national movement, or one lasting ethnic identity which can emerge without some foundation that consists of common meanings (import) and ideals. Myths are the most important part of that foundation, and the most significant among them are the myths of origin. There are several myths related to origin, and they make a whole:

1. A Myth of Temporal Origin (When we were begotten?). One of the major issues is that of locating a nation in time, including its relation to other relevant communities; there may exist different views of the issue within the nation itself.
2. A Myth of Location and Migration (Where did we come from?) Space is another dimension necessary for self-identification, which occurs as a claim to a particular territory.
3. A Myth of Ancestry (Who is our common ancestor and founding father?) It does not matter whether the common ancestor and the 'founding father of the nation' is a historical figure or a quasi-historical/mythical one; what does matter is only the symbolic kinship link between all members of the present generations and their forebears, down to the founding ancestor.
4. A Myth of the Heroic ('Golden') Age (How we were freed and became glorious?) Heroes offer models of virtuous conduct, inspiring their decadent and oppressed descendants.
5. A Myth of Decline (How we fell into a state of decay?) Why did the 'golden age' pass away? Because the old virtues were forgotten, moral decay set in, vice and sins overcame discipline and self-sacrifice; all of that opened way to the incursion of the barbarians.
6. A Myth of Regeneration (How to restore the 'golden age'?) By this myth, transition takes place from an epic sphere into the sphere of ideology which provides an appropriate 'recipe' and requires collective action; the collective action should lead to rebirth through a process of 'self-purification'.¹²

Anthony Smith justifiably wonders why some ethnic groups survive and others perish. What are the factors that help to sustain ethnic communities? It is obvious that some ethnic communities persist for centuries, and longer than that – in various societies both pre-modern and modern ones. They are "structures of long-term persistence" (*la longue durée*). In answer to this question Smith emphasizes that long-term survival of a nation depends first and foremost on active cultivation of the sense of collective uniqueness and mission. The members of the same

¹² For more on myths about origin, see: Smith, A.D. (1999), *op. cit.*, 62–68.

ethnic community have to feel not only that they are a “super-family” but also that their historic community is unique, that their heritage must be protected against internal decay and external control, and, moreover, that their community has the sacred duty to spread the values of their culture among other peoples. In other words, the development of the myth of ethnic election (the myth about the chosen people) is crucial for the survival of ethnic communities. Only those communities which managed to formulate and elaborate such belief have been capable of ensuring their long-term survival. History offers a great many examples thereof: the Jews, ancient Egypt, Persians, Armenians, the Ethiopian kingdom of Aksum, Arabians, ancient Greeks, Muscovite Russia, Frankish state, contemporary Scotland, Elizabethan England, Calvinist Holland, American colonies, Catholic Mexico.¹³

A myth of ethnic election may also strengthen the attachment of a community to its historic territory, its *holy land*. For a chosen people, only the land of their ancestors, heroes and saints can be adequate enough.¹⁴ In all likelihood, the Serbs’ attitude to Kosovo is exemplary in that sense. As sacred Serbian land, Kosovo bears in itself the Serbian myth of election, which can be seen in the choice made by Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović between the earthly kingdom and the heavenly one. Having opted for the Kingdom of Heaven, he sacrificed himself and his army, choosing eternity for the Serbian people, i.e. lasting persistence of the Serbs under the protection of God. The significance of this myth for the survival of the Serbian national identity is immeasurable, and its collapse threatens the very survival of the Serbian nation.

Viewed from this angle, the demand for ‘demythologization’ appears as a demand addressed to the Serbs to renounce their own myths (and, thus, their own identity and whatever their myths support) and in that way practically ‘disarm’ themselves so that they can be overcome. Since a society cannot function without myths, the ‘demythologization’ is accompanied with the offers of some other, ‘suitable’ myths. The ‘substitute’ myth we have been offered for a long time now is the myth of moral election of the West. The myth tells about the right of the West to intervene all over the globe guided by the ‘moral obligation’ and ‘humanitarian reasons’, even their mission of giving freedom and democracy to all peoples. The myth was born upon religious foundations, yet nowadays takes secular forms.¹⁵ We therefore deduce that the story about the ‘necessity of demythologization’ is in fact part of the conflict itself, or the continuation of the conflict – in the area of

¹³ *Op. cit.*, 125, 127, 130–135.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, 135.

¹⁵ For more, see: Šljukić, S. (2011), *op. cit.*

culture in either case – with an intention to destroy the cultural resources of the antagonist.

Conclusion

Thus, the view of Kosovo as the Serbs' sacred land and the source of the myths which constitute the Serbian identity is a perfectly modern and rational stance. The requests for its rejection are actually requests for "cultural disarmament", identity-related suicide and the capitulation of the Serbian side.

Negotiations imply mutual recognition of both sides as rational actors with particular legitimate interests. If the realistic character of the cultural/territorial resource is not recognized and one of the two sides is persistently pronounced as "unwise" and "emotional" – it actually means that reaching a settlement is not what is aspired at, but the efforts are invested into a victory by denouncing the opposite side as "irrational". This is clearly seen from the outcome which should be accomplished through "quitting unwise" and ostensible 'demythologization', and that implies giving up the territory which is the matter in dispute. Thus, a conflict over a territory of special cultural significance can only be settled if the peculiar cultural significance of the given space is acknowledged and accepted as a realistic, though 'intangible' element. Kosovo *is* a sacred Serbian land and a source of the myths which constitute the Serbian identity; that is a fact which must be taken into account in all talks or negotiations in relation to Serbia's province of Kosovo and Metohija.

Translated from Serbian by
Angelina Čanković Popović

DORĐO SLADOJE

THE SACREDNESS AND THE BURDEN OF THE VOW OF KOSOVO

I admit: It is hard for me to speak about Kosovo and Metohija without heightened emotions, but I will not burden you with lyrical variations on the topic that are found – overly, perhaps – in my poems. Yet a reminder would not come amiss of the important role played by poetry in the shaping of our historical and national consciousness, in the maintaining of the Choice and the Vow of Kosovo, i.e. of the *Vidovdan*¹ ethics. At this point I refer to the epic poetry first and foremost, “our sole substantial classic”, then to Njegoš² as the “tragic hero

¹ For better understanding of the term ‘Vidovdan ethics’, see the opening paragraphs of the contribution by Miloš Kovačević in this issue of the LLMS. Prince Lazar’s choice is taken as the germ of national ethics.

Vidovdan (St. Vitus’ Day) is a Serbian religious and, since recently, national holiday, celebrated on June 28 (June 15 in Julian calendar, the official calendar of the Serbian Orthodox Church). Moreover, it is the feast day commemorating Holy Great Martyr Prince Lazar and the Holy Serbian Martyrs fallen in the Battle of Kosovo (1389). In the Serbian culture and history it is much more than a religious holiday, for on June 28 a number of fateful events took place in the past, the most outstanding being the Assassination in Sarajevo (1914); the Treaty of Versailles (1919) and the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes later renamed as Kingdom of Yugoslavia; the Cominform Resolution (1948) and expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Eastern bloc. – *Translator’s note.*

² **Petar II Petrović Njegoš** (1813-51), usually referred to simply as Njegoš, was Prince-Bishop of Montenegro (r. from 1830) whose literary greatness is mostly based on three epic poems: *Luča mikrokozma* (*The Ray of the Microcosm*), *Gorski vijenac* (*The Mountain Wreath*) and *Lažni car Šćepan Mali* (*The False Tsar Stephen the Little*). – *Translator’s note.*

of the Kosovo thought”, and also of Rakić,³ Popa,⁴ Bećković,⁵ Nogo⁶ and other poets that have – to the extent of their individual gifts – exalted Kosovo to the realm of poetry.

A precious and invaluable contribution has been made by the Holy Orthodox Church which through the age-long slavery managed to preserve the crucial substances of our identity, the faith and the hope, the spirit and the soul of the people, and to make Kosovo the sacred, votive land – both literally and symbolically.

It was the Church and the poetry that passed the Vow of Kosovo to the generations to come, and it has become an increasingly heavy burden to these, one with which they sometimes do not know what to do.

I am not mentioning this in order to stir up Serbian nationalism and Serbian mythomania – as the culturally ‘decontaminated’ Serbs are likely to promptly interpret the terms – but because I am convinced that Kosovo is still a source of living spiritual energy which can be of great, essential help in our facing this major and now unmasked issue.

This is much too well known by those who insistently repeat that we should forget about the past – not only because they appeared therein in extremely sordid roles, but because it simultaneously implies removal

³ **Milan Rakić** (1876-1938) was a great Serbian poet, influenced by the French Symbolists as a student of law in Paris, and a prominent diplomat of the Kingdom of Serbia and later of Yugoslavia, who in 1922 became a member of the Serbian Royal Academy. During his diplomatic service at Priština (1908-1911), he wrote seven poems devoted to Kosovo, including “At Gazimestan”/”Na Gazimestanu”, “Jefimija” (monachal name of the first Serbian poetess who lived at Prince Lazar’s court), and “Simonida” (the name of Byzantine princess and wife of Milutin, King of Serbia). The former was often recited by Serbian soldiers during the Balkan Wars and the Great War, for Gazimestan was a symbolic place near the 1389 battlefield. – *Translator’s note.*

⁴ **Vasko Popa** (1922-1991) was the poet who, alongside Miodrag Pavlović, “shaped the core of the Serbian poetry” in the post-second-world-war period (Predrag Palavestra). “By his modern transposition of the oral heritage, conjuring, games and riddles, Popa created a distinctive poetic idiom of the Serbian versification”. His book of verse *Earth Erect* (*Uspravna zemlja*) contains a cycle of poems titled “Kosovo Polje” (“Kosovo Field”). Popa’s complete/collected poems are available in English translations. – *Translator’s note.*

⁵ **Matija Bećković** (b. 1939) is a charismatic Serbian poet of today and Member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. His highest achievements fall within the genres of reflexive/philosophical, religious and love poetry. An eager commentator of the current historical and political circumstances, he often goes public with his views of the situation in Kosovo and Metohija. His books include one titled *Kosovo – the Most Valuable Serbian Word* (*Kosovo – najskuplja srpska reč*). There is also a poem of his titled “Kosovo Polje” (“Kosovo Field”). – *Translator’s note.*

⁶ **Rajko Petrov Nogo** (b. 1945), Member of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of the Republic of Srpska, is a highly prominent Serbian poet, essayist and critic who has lived in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia (Belgrade). His oeuvre has earned him more than 20 high-ranking awards. His verse output is imbued with the issues of national identity, traditional culture and Orthodox faith of the Serbs. Nogo’s often-quoted sentences read: “I had Kosovo in my home” and “Kosovo is the birthplace of every Serb”. As an editor, he produced a highly esteemed anthology of the Serbian epic poetry related to (the Battle of) Kosovo. – *Translator’s note.*

of the crucial footing without which the Serbian people would be dispersed into a crowd of wretched and befuddled individuals. For, it was in the past – in tradition, myth, culture and religion, that is, in Kosovo – that the values were established which essentially determine us as individuals and as a community. What is more, they tell us we should accept the current situation and the reality on the ground, in the spirit of the traditional proverb “your sheep – your mountain”. As if a shepherd’s proverb can help us settle this epoch-making and fate-determining issue – overnight. Yet what is it we should do about a mountain dotted with a larger number of churches than sheep? In addition, it is not found recommendable to raise the question of by whom and how the current situation has been produced. But we do know, and we are obliged to say and keep repeating it, that the situation has been produced by brutal force, in the interest of the powerful and beyond international law, accompanied by the cynical excuse of alleged humanitarian operation for the rescue of the Albanian population from the persecution and pogrom by the Serbian military and police. However, the situation on the ground tells that the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija now count 200,000 less [than before]; how many *more* the “exiled” Albanians there are remains unknown, for they had even evaded the count by [once president of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz] Tito himself. The situation on the ground also includes the demolished houses, churches, cemeteries and monasteries – the brutally desecrated sacred land where, in spite of it all, some hundred thousand Serbs have remained, deprived of elementary human rights invoked in parading large talk.

*“The Power then Seized the Land and the Forts”⁷
– Reads a Line in an Epic Poem*

“The Marriage of Dušan” („Ženidba Dušanova”) is the poem our negotiators with the West should carry as a mandatory reference work. But no power lasts for ever⁸ and this is not the first time we are confronting a great power. Yet the proper questions read: Is this generation of the Serbs capable of standing the great tests of history? To what degree the Serbs of today really care about Kosovo and Metohija? What and how much can they do in order to preserve their “mainland” and the foundation of their own historical, cultural and spiritual identity? We are well aware of the frantic exterminations of the Serbian people that took place over the 20th century – through occupations, bombings, persecutions, flustering by all sorts of ideological and political concepts,

⁷ “*Sila uzme zemlju i gradove*”. The line is taken from the poem referred at the opening of this writing. – *Translator’s note.*

⁸ Literal translation of the saying „*Nijedna sila nije dovijeka*”. – *Translator’s note.*

condemnations, isolations, punishments, humiliations, and repeated bombings by both the enemies and the allies... One should not ignore or conceal the fact that a considerable part of the Serbian political and cultural elites do not feel Kosovo and Metohija to be something of their own or of importance. They would settle the issue with “unbearable lightness”, reviving our (truth is) rich experience in vassalage and rayah-style submissiveness. We can ceaselessly complain of obvious acts of injustice on the part of the world, but in this (kind of) world, the order of which is imposed by Jesuitical-oriental policy, we still have to live and survive, and not surrender what belongs to us according to the ‘justice of God and of Tsardom’. But it is easier to say than to do. The situation on the ground shows that the Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija make large majority and that, enjoying the support of their mighty allies, they have already accomplished many an attribute of statehood. What they still lack is Serbia’s confirmation of their independence – their dream and efforts ever since the foundation of the Prizren League.⁹ At first sight, our manoeuvring space seems to be dramatically limited, while the possible further concessions and compromises on the Serbian part seem to be exhausted. Although we have entered the historical ‘twilight zone’, or ‘the dark vilayet’, I think that we must not recognize the independence of the self-proclaimed state of Kosovo by any means, fully aware that the stance will produce (and has already been producing) numerous dire consequences. Anyhow, we have seen and learned the hard way what the mighty ones are ready to do in order to satisfy their own interests on alien territories. Any other solution, one that would lead to the international recognition of the so-called state of Kosovo, would produce worse and nearly unthinkable consequences to Serbia and the Serbian people. It should only suffice to cast a glance over the borders of the neighbouring states, the former Yugoslavia’s republics, and see for ourselves what awaits the Serbs in the independent Kosovo. However, in order not to sound like “a cheap prophet of catastrophe”, to put it in the wording of the poet Djordje Nešić,¹⁰ I shall only enumerate one of the lamentable Montenegrin examples. It is said that Serbian was once an official language at the Ottoman court, but it is not official in the [current] Montenegrin ‘court’; there, moreover, it is undesirable in books, textbooks, newspapers, offices... Before such a historical inversion, the “human grasp gets stuck”.

⁹ For more on the three Leagues of Prizren, see Bojan Jovanovic’s contribution “The Kosovo Hub” in this issue of LLMS. – *Translator’s note*.

¹⁰ **Djordje Nešić** (b. 1957) is a poet largely preoccupied with the Serbian historical and cultural heritage and the Serbian migrations/exoduses, winner of some major literary awards (*Žička hrisovulja* – 2015, *Zmajeva nagrada* – 2016, *Disova nagrada* 2018, *Vidovdanska povelja* – 2019). – *Translator’s note*.

It is not that others are always to be blamed for all, though. But a hunt for the domestic culprits would take us too far. It has to be said that the guilty ones for the collapse of Kosovo and Metohija are (some more, some less) nearly all of the political leaderships, beginning with those that approved of Tito's decision to disallow the return of the Serbian colonists to Kosovo and Metohija [after World War II], which drastically changed the demographic structure – to the advantage of the Albanians. A far greater and systematic problem was posed by the federal Constitution which held Serbia a hostage of its two autonomous provinces. The first serious attempt to change the status brought about fervent political conflicts and, further, led to the civil war after which the Serbs appeared to be the sole and incorrigible culprits and were cruelly punished for that. There are no visible signs of the expiration of the 'sentence': as if we had invented the custom of killing in war, while all others responded with figs and oranges. There is a dangerous process underway, 'beneath' the 'frozen screen' with an image of the Serbs as the protagonists of absolute evil which springs out of their history, myth, religion, even poetry: the process of diminution of the crimes committed by the Nazis and the Ustasha.¹¹ A special 'laundering' of history and historical conscience is underway, including the blaming of the victim.

And now – we find ourselves in this situation: pressed and cornered by the mighty and the powerful from all sides. But we simply have no right to surrender. It may sound too naïve when I say that the constitutional/legal status of Kosovo and Metohija should be additionally reinforced, which shall not, and still need not, oblige the Albanians, but it will oblige *us* and those coming after us. It will oblige us, first and foremost, to enable the Serbs' survival in Kosovo and Metohija in every way, their survival under the circumstances bearable for humans, to additionally protect our cultural and historical heritage, to speak – more frequently and more loudly – about the momentous significance of Kosovo and Metohija for our survival, to take advantage of the smallest favourable elements in international relations, to seek friends who are willing to empathize and to help, and capable of empathizing. And I would not fail to reckon with the help of God either.

In the meanwhile, we had better keep strengthening Serbia in every respect – economically, demographically, technologically, militarily, culturally and morally. Morally in particular. Whether we shall succeed in defending ourselves, exhausted by history as we are, stuck

¹¹ **Ustashe** (Croatian Revolutionary Movement) was a Croatian Fascist, ultranationalist and terrorist organization which came into power during World War II in the Fascist puppet-state, the 'Independent State of Croatia'. They committed mass executions (many hundreds of thousands) of Serbs, Jews and Roma using most abhorrent methods. – *Translator's note.*

too long in the mire of transition and preoccupied with providing for ‘food and feathers’, or Kosovo shall be lost in the fogs of our Europe-bound journey – that is hard to say, and fortune-telling does not benefit me. It is up to us to do whatever we can, and more than that, in order to keep Kosovo and Metohija for ourselves.

As to the future generations, they will – I believe – be better than we have been, which is not a hard thing at all. We have no right to surrender Kosovo and Metohija on their behalf, for they could tell us, as soon as tomorrow, that we did not need sacrifice ourselves to that extent. In the wake of a deeper logic of the Serbian history, I would not say ‘destiny’, they will come into the possession of the sacredness and the burden of the Vow of Kosovo – unless these fade out in our generation. And I still have the hope that they will not.

Translated from Serbian by
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ŽIVOJIN RAKOČEVIĆ

THE DIVISION AND THE VOCABULARY LACKING IN INTELLIGIBILITY

The basic contemporary terms, occurrences and phenomena the life in Kosovo and Metohija have mostly resulted from the effects of some basic processes: the formation of ghettos in the Serbs' social life, the domination of the Albanian ethnocracy where the isolated Serbian communities/enclaves live and the collapse of the system established by the international community for the purpose of protecting human rights and the implementation of law. The superimposed isolation, unintelligible dynamic of the ghettos, neo-romanticism of the Albanians, the interests of great powers, ideological heritage, ignorance, 'epical' obstacles, political correctness and language discrimination – they have all produced a new terminology or revised the old one which has moved into our present-day communication. The search for signs, symbols and terms supposed to be able to create a multiple and varying interpretation of *one* truth on the opposing sides in the conflict has built up a kind of the 'vocabulary lacking in intelligibility'. The Serbian social life, cultural and scholarly public, as well as the political spectrum – facing ambiguities, interests, quick change/mutation of the new reality – are basically forced to consume that kind of untruth which partially implies consent to possible fatal consequences. This contribution is made up of parts of some texts which – dealing with a variety of topics – defined and registered that new vocabulary and the language of lacking intelligibility built in order to (among other things) establish some new divisions and separations in the new, forcibly constituted entities.

The Division

The idea of dividing Kosovo has existed for as long as the conflict itself; it has existed as a solution, as an inevitability if nothing else can be gained, as the ultimate separation of the Serbs and the Albanians, as a pragmatic and realistic solution, as a burden which no one is brave enough to enlist in their agenda. The idea occurs in difficult moments as a kind of outlet the appearance of which is known to nobody, just as it is not known who and when shall have to pay the price of its implementation.

The politicians who think that the migration northwards would empower Kosovska Mitrovica and improve the ethnic 'blood count' are terribly wrong. For, once 'set in motion', the people from the south [of Kosovo and Metohija] will not and cannot stay with their 35,000 fellow-Serbs in the northern part. They will not stay in Raška either (though the town is near the border), they will even avoid Kraljevo; they will run away as far as possible – toward Belgrade or the West. In that way, the north of Kosovo will lose its hinterland, the university will lose its students, the hospital will be left without patients, commerce will not keep its passable businesses... What the north will become is a blind alley with only criminals left there capable of trading a few items.

The plan consists of three moves only: triggering of a terrorist attack in which a large number of Serbs would be killed; Belgrade's reaction and the entry of the Serbian army down to the Ibar river; and, lastly, a swift ethnic-cleansing attack on the Serbs south of the Ibar and the destruction of all the Serbian monuments of spiritual heritage and culture.

The roles of KFOR and NATO in the protection of the Serbs in K&M have never been defined in full. What can therefore be expected is – like on March 17, 2004 – complete indifference.

Despite the signals about NATO protecting the Serbian churches and monasteries, that is not going to happen, for merely a thorough laying waste can remove the 'landmine' from the foundations of the Albanian nation. As to the Serbian ghettos, they [the Albanians] would only open corridors for their exit from K&M.

A division of Kosovo based on the passionate territorial expansion and demarcation sketching is the worst possible of all solutions. For, in that way, Kosovo would for the first time be left with no Serbs there, while the spiritual, cultural and national context would be left without its basic and constitutive symbols.

Even in that case, the separation between the Serbs and the Albanians is not possible. The anarchical creation along the new Serbian borders would again generate problems similar to the current ones. Another scenario would imply that the Association of the Serb Municipalities and its rights according to Kosovo's legislation are (misre)

presented as a kind of separation and concession to the Serbs while allowing for the soft outflow of the Serbs south of the Ibar.

The crucial question reads: What is to be lost and what is to be gained through division?

SERBIA'S GAINS: At least a piece of territory and a delusive expectation of attaching the Republic of Srpska; opens way to the European Union and removes the burden of Kosovo; breaks off with 'mythology', turns to itself and accepts the reality.

SERBIA'S LOSS: Surrenders its 80,000 Serbs; abandons the major holy places, cultural heritage, symbols of statehood.

KOSOVO'S GAINS: Kosovo without the Serbs and without special provisions for the Serbs who are to vanish soon if they do not leave immediately; possibility of uniting with Albania. In the future, they would repeat the same step in [North] Macedonia and create 'Great Albania'. The greater gain is the recognition by Serbia and perhaps (alongside) part of the territory referred to by the Albanians as the Preševo Valley (Bujanovac, Preševo, Medveda).

KOSOVO'S LOSS: Not a negligible part of the territory in the north of K&M, for they could in time strengthen their position, mineral and water resources; the little which is left of its multiethnic character – useful for access to Europe, for they would otherwise be a Muslim, ethnically cleansed country.

THE WEST GAINS a practical solution regardless of how troublesome it may prove, but – if carried out adroitly – everything is over within a short while; the recognition of Kosovo and opening its full prospects for EU expansion; the independence of Kosovo gets rounded off and Serbia is no longer a factor on which so much in the Balkans depends.

THE WEST LOSES: The division may as a model extend to Bosnia and Herzegovina, [North] Macedonia, and the Russians would utilize it in the case of Crimea and thus make the territory a precedent. Kosovo is left ethnically pure, Albanian, despite the claim that the Serbs gave their consent. The Muslim Kosovo would be less acceptable for the countries of the European Union that are more sensitive to the Muslims.

RUSSIA GAINS an excellent precedent for its request for the same being applied to Crimea, with provisions for Donbas and wherever they find the solution suitable for them; the idea of the multiethnic Kosovo collapses definitely; an excuse for approving Kosovo's entry to the United Nations, for Serbia has recognized it by agreement – although this would not be done before the recognition of Crimea and the lifting of sanctions; a chance to continue the separation of Srpska.

RUSSIA'S LOSS: It is not clear at all what Russia can lose in the Balkans.

The Myth

Communism proclaimed Kosovo as a myth and a legend, the ‘Greater-Serbian’ models of rule. Although the head of *Svetovid*¹² just slightly creeps up in this narrative, it [Kosovo] is not a blurry reflection of our undeveloped collective consciousness – our current knowledge has been extorted!

It is here [in Kosovo] that one can lean on the “myth, vow, legend”, you can touch Dečani with your own hands and – across the hectares of the frescoes therein – find your own, the best European, picture of the age. Are the paintings at Louvre or the stars in Hollywood’s sidewalk mythology or reality?

It was from here, from the deepest Ottoman darkness, that poet Milan Rakić,¹³ French student, reported in 1906: “The responsibility rests with the Turks for this, and with the Albanians for that,” and some responsibility also rests with our “criminal idleness”. Mathematically accurate, with a clear-cut plan, torn between great interests and the Serbs longing for freedom.

The New Reality

The sole and relatively efficient obstacle to the slavish defragmentation was the experience of real Kosovo, and “whatever was born in those hills would be delivered with a reflex of Kosovo’s blood in the eyes”, as Andrić¹⁴ wrote referring to Montenegro. Today, self-hatred has made blood boiling in a kind of elite there. Njegoš¹⁵ – the deluded myth-adorer – is wrong!

¹² **Svetovid** is a modified name of Sventovit (Old Slavonic god of war and fertility). The modification was generated by a process of misleading interpretations, first as Sveti Vid (Saint Vitus) and later, since the 19th century as referring to the Battle of Kosovo (1389) and the ensuing symbol of anti-Turkish resistance and Serbian heroism. – *Translator’s note.*

¹³ **Milan Rakić** (1876–1938) was a great Serbian poet, influenced by the French Symbolists as a student of law in Paris, and a prominent diplomat of the Kingdom of Serbia and later of Yugoslavia, who in 1922 became Member of the Serbian Royal Academy. During his diplomatic service in Priština (1908–1911), he wrote seven poems devoted to Kosovo. – *Translator’s note.*

¹⁴ **Ivo Andrić** (1892–1975) was Yugoslav/Serbian writer, 1961 Nobel Laureate. – *Translator’s note.*

¹⁵ **Petar II Petrović Njegoš** (1813–51), usually referred to simply as Njegoš, was Prince-Bishop of Montenegro (r. from 1830) whose literary greatness is mostly based on three epic poems: *Luča mikrokozma* (*The Ray of the Microcosm*), *Gorski vijenac* (*The Mountain Wreath*) and *Lažni car Šćepan Mali* (*The False Tisar Stephen the Little*). The author is sarcastic about the current policies of Montenegro’s government which denies the Serb identity of the population and aggressively superimposes the recently invented Montenegrin one, including the name of the language. – *Translator’s note.*

The sole reality in Kosovo is that the project has failed and that a collapse shall come inevitably; for that reason, in that forthcoming chaos, the West must not retain any Serbian interest or influence there.

Ethnocracy

In Kosovo, the rule of an ethnos has been established which has built the projection of Albanian freedom into all structures. The idea implies the consents of all others to an alien ethnic freedom, the alien peculiarities of mentality, manners of behavior, historical memory and view of the world. Under Kosovo's ethnocracy, the others and the different ones are embarrassing witnesses of a system which has almost rounded off the final clash as a historic success. The ethnocracy allows every individual and institution it represents to interpret legislation in a 'creative' manner, to take a special attitude toward others and to protect national interests in every place. A month ago, during a visit to the Church of Christ the Saviour in Priština, a police officer of Kosovo made the visitors show their identity cards; to the remark that he was a good guard of the church he responded with silence, for his task is actually to prevent the Serbs from entering the church and administering any kind of religious service. Despite the fact that the church has been attacked, desecrated and mined dozens of times. Despite the fact that there is no decision which authorizes him to do his job, he is keen on putting into practice the majority's opinion that this church is a threat to the Albanians and must therefore be eliminated.

A Simulacrum-Statehood

Kosovo is but a replica which has never had its original, and the replica is permanently searching for its content and purpose.

The Albanians have lost every idea, every sense, every form of statehood on that territory. In this interspace, absurdity is inflating: its blow-up in this shell empty of content is but a matter of time.

The Ghetto

And the Serbs of the ghetto have for centuries been responding with the sentence – "This day is theirs!" They live in the hope that their ghetto on Mt. Šara can be a mini-state, that the enclave of Orahovac with its 350 inhabitants may become a prosperous enterprise, that the community of Gračanica has the right to be a kibbutz, that a peasant in the Morava Valley can take care of his children and the churches on

his isle... These people have for centuries been telling everyone: Leave us alone – in our home!

An artist [*stvaralac*]¹⁶ in this tentatively modern age lacks basic security; his/her freedom of mobility is limited; he/she is not present in public, whether general or professional; material supplies are none or – individually perceived as – unjustly distributed; the institutions that used to exist in the Province have fallen apart, while some of them endure just formally; their urban public/audiences and urban milieu have been decimated, except in the northern part of Kosovska Mitrovica; fear from ethnic blind forces and some survival modes have turned into the style of life and creative work; the phenomenon of total clash annihilates an artist as a person and isolates him in a small community of the ghetto.

A superficial assessment from the sidelines – often initiated by political views – shows that the situation results in evident and drastic drop in productivity, lack of poetic definition, provincial marginalization, absence of competition and dulling in the shadow of the splendid art of the Serbian Middle Ages. However, it was nothing else but that “reality on the ground” – the conflict, the phenomenon of cultural clash of the realms, helplessness and being forced into an alien ethnic and institutional freedom, the permanent state of threat for the mother tongue and fear from using it – that has led the *stvaraoci* presented in this book to (most often) examine: the phenomenon of freedom; the relation the Other (person, ethos) – Me; the influence on the social context; art as atonement for personal and national doom.

Instant Identity and Integration of the Serbian Heritage into the General Albanian Context

In an underdeveloped social context, the contemporary communication media and the speed of communicating messages lead to the establishment of an ‘instant identity’. Several aggressive campaigns have led to a radical turn-around in the public opinion with regard to whose is the cultural heritage in Kosovo and Metohija. Owing to such an approach, in a period shorter than 15 years, i.e. since the pogrom of March 17, 2004, 80% of the Albanians will now say in public that the Serbian churches were in the Middle Ages taken away from the Albanians by the Serbs and that these are the cultural heritage of Kosovo. The American concept of the creation of the nation-state of the

¹⁶ The word *stvaralac* (usually: ‘artist’, Pl. *stvaraoci*) in Serbian designates not only creative people in visual arts, but also writers, those in theatre arts, architecture, education, culture, science etc. – *Translator’s note*.

Kosovari¹⁷ has essentially been rejected by Albanian nationalism yet still resorted to in the cases of the Serbs' integration and their constitution within the framework of the Albanian ethnic context. Some aggressive American proposals, such as the establishment of 'Kosovology', have failed to yield any substantial results.

*The Unity of Tribes and Euro-Atlantic Ideas:
A Model of Life or Harmonious Dualism*

The list of unresolved issues includes a kind of dualist harmony consisting of tribal consciousness and European legislation. The Development of this mode of thinking and dual decision-making was perfected by Yugoslavia's communism which allowed for autonomous decisions being made at the level of family/village/tribe/old men and then delegated to a higher instance of the Communist Party. The model has now been elaborated into three segments: sub-institutions, institutions, and super-institutions. The first segment is made up of tribal, war-derived and criminal elites. The second one consists of institutions, municipalities, the Parliament, judicature. The third segment is – protection-exerting embassies. The second level is a kind of weak medium which must exist, satisfy the form(alities) and fail to make decisions on crucial issues but conveys the decisions of the powerful groups according to the sources of protection.

*The Production of Islam in Kosovo,
a Game Played with the Allies*

Islam and nationalism make the two basic propellants of the Albanians, enjoying the unreserved support of the American policy in the belief that nationalism would neutralize Islam in a way. Owing to such view, the idea of democracy and the idea of coexistence proved victims, as did all those who do not fall within the Albanian corpus afterwards. Those were the preconditions for the irreversible way to troubles.

The very moment when the American impact shyly sent the message to the Albanians and Hashim Thaçi that they may lose the support, the latter unleashed the demon of extremist Islam. Only then was it realized by the majority of those familiar with the matter that Islam is

¹⁷ The adjective *Kosovar* belongs to the Albanian language, as does the corresponding ethnonym *Kosovari*, which refers to the Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija. The ethnic Albanians there use the latter to designate the overall population in the province (including non-Albanians). The Serbian-language counterparts are the adjective *kosovski* and the ethnonym for the Serbs living in Kosovo (and Metohija) – *Kosovci*. – *Translator's note*.

a power equal to nationalism, and that both of these powers are mostly under the control of one man – Hashim Thaçi. Islam is now instrumentalised in the form of blackmailing the Americans. Islam is part of identity, partially financed by Arabian circles, and the Priština-based authorities have radicalized it in the wake of the once ‘Yugoslav model’. In those times [while the former Yugoslavia existed], the Albanians in power, judges and prosecutors, used to send the Albanian nationalists to prison. It was in prisons that “schooling” took place of those who now control the system here. Following the same model, Kosovo now arrests people accusing them of terrorism, of recruiting Islamists or backing the group up. During one of the raids, as many as thirty Kosovo’s imams were detained. They were given a school of theirs, and Priština got a might-exerting means of blackmail in dealing with the West. Kosovo is now facing the special court to try the crimes committed by the KLA,¹⁸ yet gaining additional time available to Islam to complete its job – as it did in New Jersey, Frankfurt and on the Middle East battlegrounds.

*The Serbian Capacity for Endurance,
Speeding-Up of the Final Solution and Fear from
the Possibility that the Serbs Would Keep Enduring*

‘Endurance’ is the sole word which has over the whole past period been part of every segment of life in Kosovo and Metohija; it comprises the full deprivation of freedom, each personal or general doom and humiliation.

The Serbs must be deprived of the freedom to endure. This is the first time that *time* has sided with them: ‘rivers’ of people flow out of Kosovo, and they are not ‘rivers’ of the Serbs. The interior political scene has for the past twenty years been in sanguinary ferment, and the West fails to show much interest in it. The Serbs have to be put out, for they are the defeated, and the minutest of their victories, even in their struggle for life, means that the enemy has convalesced so as to be capable of playing some role in the collapse of Kosovo. The failure of Kosovo is solely Kosovo’s business, and that is what the foreigners must ensure for them.

¹⁸ A new tribunal, Kosovo Relocated Judicial Institution, funded by the European Union, has been established in The Hague: Kosovo Specialist Chambers (based in the Netherlands) and the Specialist Prosecutor’s Office (with its seat in Priština) in order to try cases of war crimes during the 1998-9 conflict in Kosovo committed by the paramilitary Kosovo Liberation Army, including trafficking in human organs. They also exist within the framework of Kosovo legislation. The judges appointed come from several countries of Europe, the U.S.A. and Canada. – *Translator’s note.*

*Low-Intensity Repression, Devastation,
Safety of a Ghetto*

Murders, kidnapping, attacks, communication under escort and continual, years-long threats have functionally been replaced with institutional repression. The production of small obstacles and transition from one context (legal, economic, political, cultural, use of language) into another implies some forms of repression that are actually undetectable. In such cases, an individual is deprived of any protection and abandoned/left to his own mechanisms of defence and capacity for endurance. In that way, life is deprived of sense on daily basis, or humiliation begins to be felt as a natural condition and a precondition for survival. The non-Albanian civil servants in the recent administration get the feeling and need for revenge – against the system which abandoned them and forced them to work in Kosovo's institutions. The following case has been recorded at the Brnjak checkpoint near Zubin Potok: A Serb wearing the uniform of the Kosovo police – having needlessly harassed a fellow-Serb – says: "I've been betrayed by the state of Serbia!" Yet above all stand the "unbearable lightness" of security measures and a systematic obliviousness to the Serb victims.

Dozens of incidents, attacks, acts of humiliation and ethnic mimicry have become part of institutional behaviour. This situation is presented to the public and the foreigners in the 'language' of European legislation and standards, which is an aggravating circumstance. The said verbiage fits into the statistics according to which the local incidents are but child's play as compared to the events in the democratic world.

Rule

The Serbs have lost the right to rule over the Albanians, the Albanians have lost the right to rule over the Serbs – may it be the one and last Serb left there. That is the key to the commencement of a dialogue – giving up the ambition to *rule over*. And the response of the Serbs in the ghettos has for centuries been in the sentence: "This day is theirs!" They live in the hope that their ghetto in Mt. Šara can be a mini-state, that the Orahovac enclave with its 350 inhabitants may become a prosperous enterprise, that the community of Gračanica has the right to be a kibbutz, that a peasant in the Morava Valley can take care of his children and the churches on his isle...

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DRAGAN HAMOVIĆ

THE EXPLANATION OF “PRIZREN”

I felt all our helplessness, all sorrow of mine. “Prizren”, I whispered, with a bit of affectation. Like the word ‘Sumatra’ reaching the inner ear of Crnjanski¹ to lend sound to an intimate distance, the word ‘Prizren’ found itself in the ear of the poet testifying herewith, yet as a sound-employing conjuration rather than a pure cultural association. The word meant to him a *fleeting glance* [the Serbian verb *prizirati*, *prizreti*] at something rather than an insight or a view. He had not been in a situation to step onto the bank of the Bistrica and check upon the accuracy of the divined description from the opening of the poem “Prizren, Unobserved”: “The town, the lower town behind, the upper town high up. / They take off for a moment, then quickly land. / I lack wording adjustable enough to describe all of that with accuracy: With drifts fortified from inside, O Prizren.” *Yet in my soul, deep down, despite all the baulk at admitting so, I felt immeasurable love for the distant hillsides... Like in a crazy hallucination, I would soar up into the boundless morning mists, to stretch out my arm and gently stroke the distant mounts of Prokletije, of Šara.*²

When I recently, in a discreet evening group of travellers from Belgrade, was crossing Dušan Bridge, while heading to the endowment

¹ **Miloš Crnjanski** (1893-1977) was one of the greatest Serbian authors ever. He wrote poetry, fiction, plays, travel literature, essays and literary critique. “Sumatra” is one of his most famous poems, and its title inspired an avant-garde movement in the art of literature launched by Crnjanski as his vision of the cosmic harmony, articulated in his text *The Explanation of Sumatra* (1920) – Sumatraism. At this point, his claim that “It is with love that I shall establish a bond between things far away from each other” also seems explanatory. – *Translator’s note.*

² **Prokletije** is a mountain range stretching across southern Serbia/Kosovo-Metohija, eastern Montenegro and northern Albania. **Šara**, or *Šar-planina*, is another mountain range, covering the border areas of Serbia/Kosovo (where the first slopes rise at Prizren), North Macedonia and Albania. – *Translator’s note.*

of Sima Andrejević Igumanov – the ‘re-awoken’ Seminary, a slope emerged which I had seen in a ‘fleeting glance’ (*prizirao*) and depicted lyrically, the view from above demarcated by the Kaljaja’s³ steady stone walls. The Seminary’s gate demarcates the small yet exalted town ‘isle’ of the Serbian tongue and faith. The lifesaving mainland during the Hagarians⁴ thuggery during the turmoil of 1999. It is now more than that, for here reside dozens of future priests, the boys who prematurely reach maturity. As visitors coming there not by chance, we found vigorous cheer before which we had to feel ashamed. There, behind the gate, the humming beehive order is maintained by the chosen men of Dečani, the supporting staff of the Bishop, the patient restorer of the silent-gone educational/sacred place, the young and smart teachers who had mostly come from the eminent Greek faculties of theology. They have been joined by the ‘worker bee’ whose name is Valentina Pitulić, our determined galvanizer in the travel venture, the connoisseur of the ancient and heart-breaking local songs. And when she begins to sing them, she tears them out of her soul.

In the same kind of ‘siege’ there is, on the opposite side of the Bistrica river, stuck between disgraceful buildings, Mother of God Ljeviška⁵, still sooty here and there ever since the fire-raising – and yet infinitely, in itself, free. Like the Seminary behind its gate, the Ljeviška has, within its multi-layer walls, safeguarded the invisible Prizren in Prizren to this day. That Prizren which at some moments soars off the ground leaving the earthly Prizren down below. It ascends, often far from the inner eyes which could see that.

Next day: *Miholjdan*⁶ at Velika Hoča, under the sunlight. The Bishop was administering [the Divine Liturgy] in front of St. Stephen’s

³ **Kaljaja** is a fortress at Prizren, first built by Byzantium and later, in the 14th century, expanded and reinforced by Stefan Dušan, Emperor of the Serbs and Greeks, whose residence it became. It is also referred to as Dušan’s Fortress (*Dušanov grad*) or Prizren Fortress (*Prizrenski grad*). – *Translator’s note*.

⁴ **Hagarians** (*Agarjani* in Serbian) is a synonymous name for the Muslims, according to Early Christian writers who thus referred to the ancient Arabs. The word has survived in literature and, partially, in historical writings. – *Translator’s note*.

⁵ **Bogorodica Ljeviška** is the Slavic name, adjusted to the deformed folk pronunciation, of *Metera Eleousa* (Mother of God of Tenderness), the church which was in medieval Serbia the seat of the (Metropolitan) Bishopric of Raška. It was erected in 1306-7 on an Early Christian churchsite, as an endowment of King Stefan Milutin. Under the Ottoman rule it was repeatedly demolished, then converted into a mosque. During the March 2004 unrest, it was shelled and set to fire by the Albanian vandals. In 2006, it was entered on the UNESCO World Heritage List. – *Translator’s note*.

⁶ **Miholjdan** is the religious feast day dedicated to St. Kyriakos the Anchorite/ Cyriacus the Hermit, celebrated on October 12 (September 29 by the Julian calendar used by the Serbian Orthodox Church). In Serbia, the feast marks the end of the grape harvest. Traditionally, the Serbian folk refer to this feast day in relation to St. Michael, and this is accounted by the Roman Catholic practice of celebrating the Holy Archangel (Mihovil, locally) on September 29 by Gregorian calendar. – *Translator’s note*.

Church built of stone. There in Hoča, too, the present and the absent are in a firm union. Next to the church building there is a dovecote, which I approached recklessly. The pigeons, frightened, scattered around the churchyard, and soon they calmed down on the roof of the small church – eight of them, and the ninth one perching atop the cross above the altar. Indeed, Velika Hoča is a village greater than itself. Ever since the issue of its charter of foundation intended for an appendage to the Chilandar family. “There were Hoča and another Hoča and a market square, and I planted two vineyards there.” So Velika Hoča, despite all the troubles, has lived there for eight burdensome centuries in accordance with its mission, and so it does now, besieged yet protected and encouraged by the word of the first almighty and holy vineyard keeper whose plantation here still pours out the blood of Christ and the bitter joy of man.

Velika Hoča has – let us play with words now – grown into a big *Hoću* [‘I will’], into another name of survival and steadfastness. What used to be Stara Srbija [‘Old Serbia’]⁷ has condensed, in its most reduced form, in that village: a great many churches and household roofs – either whole or in traces – and the blessed vineyards all around. Unsilenced abundance of old life and the clusters of children, both native and those who had arrived from different parts, gathered together today, on this warm day of *Miholjdan*. In a firm union of the present and the absent.

What has been lost or wasted in width, has condensed in depth, in an active strength of resistance – both on the territory of Velika Hoča and among the singing walls of the Patriarchate [of Peć], Dečani, Ljeviška, Prizren’s Seminary, and also in other places, less renowned or remote and deserted ones. Vineyard keepers, peasants, monks, students and their teachers who continue to live here, under siege – are like Sumatra far away from us who spend our lives in seeming freedom and rid of the burden of the hard vow they carry out there as a self-understood task. They do not fight for bare life, for bare life is found everywhere but there. As Vinaver⁸ said when writing about Grigorije Božović,⁹ the hero and storytelling witness of Old Serbia, they lived “for something more eternal”,

⁷ The name **Stara Srbija** came into use in the 19th century to designate the territory of the present-day Raška, Kosovo and Metohija and northwestern Macedonia which was part of the late-medieval Serbian state. – *Translator’s note.*

⁸ **Stanislav Vinaver** (1891–1955) was a highest-ranking Serbian Expressionist and Modernist poet, literary essayist and translator from several languages. – *Translator’s note.*

⁹ **Grigorije Božović** (1880–1945) was a writer and professor at the Prizren Seminary, politically very active. His short stories describe life in Kosovo and Metohija and, to some extent, Macedonia. Sentenced to death by the Communist regime, he was ignored as a writer in the postwar period. Belgrade’s District Court rehabilitated him in 2008. There was a publishing house in Priština bearing his name. A literary award (conferred by the cultural centre at Zubin Potok, Kosovo) has also been given his name. – *Translator’s note.*

which went beyond the horizon of narrow individual lives. “They all bore the inextinguishable fervour of the chance for a great moment of valour. When the moment does come, no one feels fear for his own life, for his petty living. Compared to that great moment, everything else is trivial.”

Vinaver, that smart son of Polish Jews, comprehended the enigma of Kosovo to its full human heart. But let us skip big words, they have been heard before. We who are not there claim only the right to feel ashamed and to some acts originating therefrom, feeling ashamed before these inner ‘armoured soldiers’, the living ‘title-deeds’ of our endurance in Kosovo, apart from the built title-deeds which so many times were set to fire, looted and erected anew. Like, say, the Prizren Seminary, with those young men who do and do not resemble their peers but could teach many a lesson to the confused generations of advanced age while themselves maturing in the midst of this austere desert. As did St. Petar Koriški¹⁰ nearby in the olden days, while withstanding persistently the hosts of demons which encircled him: “I am dust and ashes before my Lord (...) For the perishable should be clad in the unperishable, and the mortal should be clad in immortality.”¹¹

Petar and our present-day hermits in Metohija come from the same honourable lineage. Some scenes from Teodosije’s biography of the ascetic from Koriša seem to warn of the recent scenes of demonic assaults in the same area. “Having gathered in a crowd they assailed the holy man” and “began to drag him, tearing his body over the pointed stones”, repeatedly setting upon him who resisted with his faith and vow even when he now and then fell or stumbled:

The demons then went away and seemingly left the holy man alone for a long while, but then again, like a multitude of soldiers mustered again and turned on the holy one. And they filled the whole valley and marched, under arms, across the rocks, with helmets shaped as heads of boars and with faces like those of bears and other beasts on their heads (...) What now, you fool? Come to your senses and obey us: Stand up, go away, so as not to die wretchedly slaughtered with a sword. We shall not leave behind as much as your dry body for human burial; we shall cut apart the limbs and scatter them around for the desert beasts to eat, so that the others, seeing the way you were killed, would not dare offend us and struggle like you did.

¹⁰ **Saint Petar Koriški** lived in the 13th century. He was born in the village of Koriša, near St. Mark’s Monastery, in the vicinity of Prizren. The feast day of this saint is celebrated by the Serbian Orthodox Church on June 5 (O.S.)/June 18 by Gregorian calendar. – *Translator’s note.*

¹¹ This and the quotations to follow below are taken from the hagiography of St. Petar Koriški written at the beginning of the 14th century by the Serbian monk and writer Teodosije. – *Translator’s note.*

The above-presented hagiographical depiction of the onrush of murderous hosts invokes the fiendish year 1999. The Battle for Košare¹² was ferocious, but as General [Nebojša] Pavković said, the Battle of Mt. Paštrik¹³ – here, on the outskirts of Prizren and the Koriša desert – has been registered in war documents as the hardest-fought one. In addition to the ‘cannon fodder’ of the KLA and the Albanian Army, General Clark deployed the American strategic air force, B-52 and B-1 bombers which “struck against our units from the stratosphere”, turning some parts of the mountain into the soil of the Moon. “However, it happened once only” – testified the Serbian general, now besieged by the prison drabness abroad – “that they managed to break through the frontline of our defence in the direction toward Gora/Župa and get 200 to 400 meters into the territory of Serbia. The heroes of the 549th Brigade recovered their positions as soon as the next day.” In the defence of Košare and Mt. Paštrik, we believe, the force of resistance – in addition to our contemporary heroes hit heavily from the hellish stratosphere – was poured upon them from a higher elevation, by the ancient warrior of Koriša, Petar, as well as the shades of old time champions of unquestionable, hopeless resistance from Podrima and Velika Hoča. Those whom Grigorije Božović depicted in his short stories: “The Manitaševićs got this last name of theirs because the Arnauts could in no other way account for their valour and their medieval fighting spirit.¹⁴ But among these men, the most gallant heroism was found with the Mijajlović family. (...) They would go into death as if marching into memoirs. And into the Arnauts’ verse.”

It is in an even more convincing, and suiting better to our circumstances, way that ‘the Andrić of Old Serbia’¹⁵ depicted the “non-fictitious characters” of his contemporaries whose lives fell within the darkest age, the beginning of the twentieth century, when multiplied lawlessness was extinguishing the last hope for the Serbian survival. Like at the beginning of Božović’s short story “Oklopnik bez straha i mane” [“The Soldier in Armour, Free from Fear and Fault”]:

¹² **Košare** was the military outpost on the border between the F.R. of Yugoslavia and Albania where the KLA, backed up by the Albanian Army and NATO, attempted ground invasion and seizure of Metohija. The battle lasted from April 9 to June 10, 1999. The KLA captured the post, but could not break the second line of defence and get deeper into Kosovo-Metohija. – *Translator’s note.*

¹³ The **Battle of Mt. Paštrik** (or ‘Operation Arrow’) lasted from May 26 to June 10, 1999. It included multiple strikes of the KLA enjoying the assistance of the Albanian Army and NATO; the aim was to ‘open’ a communication corridor for a possible land invasion of Kosovo-Metohija/Yugoslavia. – *Translator’s note.*

¹⁴ The name **Manitašević** is derived from the adjective *manit*, *mahnit*, meaning ‘wild’, ‘raving’. – *Translator’s note.*

¹⁵ In various literary essays and reviews, Božović is often referred to as “the [Ivo] Andrić of Old Serbia” or “the Andrić of Kosovo”. – *Translator’s note.*

For, the time was one of terror. The Young Turks had determinedly set out to cure us of the Kosovo disease. Our schools got closed, the priests were arrested, prominent men were killed under the control of the authorities, while the oppression by the Arnauts went over the top. Although fatigued, we almost hopelessly yet with equal steadfastness reduced our mission to invigorating the remaining strength of a really wild race for an irrational resistance...

A test of extreme hopelessness hovers above the steadfast people of Old Serbia, one of the kind Petar Koriški had to pass at the climax of his ascetic endeavour, the test announced by the voice of the leader among the demons: "But why do we fight against you at all? And suffering so much without reason you keep exhausting your life? Because we want to hurt or curse you worse than that!" Defeat occurs when we consent to it by ourselves. Otherwise, there is no defeat. It is on that kind of brink that Božović's characters find themselves in the time of Rakić's¹⁶ consular office at Priština. Uncle Mojsil Zlatanović holds his piece of soil in his teeth while awaiting Serbia. Father Stoša of Devič, weakened in spirit, prays to Saint Joanikije to not keep him in temptation and to show him what he demands from "the wretched people here", then runs away with no thought near his mind about the Serbian soldiers reciting Rakić on the consecrated Gazimestan as soon as a year later. The Turkish Gora-born¹⁷ convert Suly-Captain postpones the circumcision of his son, expecting the dawn of Serbian freedom.

The ominous endlessness of the slavish vegetation offered to us as a deserved and finite reality by the law-disrespecting figures, smiling and in soft wording, those demons disguised in powerful friends who prescribe the remedy for our "Kosovo disease" – that is the test to our collective nine-layer consciousness and to the adaptable conscience of each of us individually. "I halted the horse and turned it around so as to cast one more glance across Kosovo", writes Božović in his short story "Čudni podvižnik" ["The Strange Ascetic"]: "I hate it, as a rayah I wholly

¹⁶ **Milan Rakić** (1876-1938) was a great Serbian poet, influenced by the French Symbolists as a student of law in Paris, and a prominent diplomat of the Kingdom of Serbia and later of Yugoslavia, who in 1922 became a member of the Serbian Royal Academy. During his diplomatic service at Priština (1908-1911), he wrote seven poems devoted to Kosovo, including "At Gazimestan"/"Na Gazimestanu", "Jefimija" (monachal name of the first Serbian poetess who lived at Prince Lazar's court), and "Simonida" (the name of Byzantine princess and wife of Milutin, King of Serbia). The former was often recited by Serbian soldiers during the Balkan Wars and the Great War, for Gazimestan was a symbolic place near the 1389 battlefield. – *Translator's note.*

¹⁷ The character belongs to the Gorani people who inhabit the Gora region, i.e. the triangle between Kosovo and Metohija, Albania and North Macedonia. These highlanders are Islamized Slavs who speak *goranski*, a transitional Slavic dialect. – *Translator's note.*

detest it, for it gave me the life of a slave, and yet, I never have enough of it. (...) I look down the field, watching all its [Kosovo's] beauty. But the ages speak up and my sight is getting blurred." Those who directly listen to the speech of ages on the critical places within the ancient Serbian memory pass that test with distinction – for us who stay away, fobbed off.

That wise Swiss, the connoisseur of the mysteries of collective depths, gave us an answer long ago, though not thinking of the Serbs' case, yet bearing the general case of the European man in mind: "Anyone who has lost the historical symbols and cannot be satisfied with substitutes is certainly in a very difficult position today: before him there yawns the void, and he turns away from it in horror. What is worse, the vacuum gets filled with absurd political and social ideas, which one and all are distinguished by their spiritual bleakness."¹⁸ The principle, as explained by Carl Gustav Jung. And what is it we are doing, we to whom Prizren is getting as far away as Sumatra? We who get to thinking that oblivion is the solution and that the facts of this moment are eternal truth? Here is what my fleeting glance had caught before my eyes could see it, which I set to verify on the spot: "To the overripe and the scorned one – little is too much, / Turmoil will lead to harmony, affliction will educate. / Archangels are wiping soot off Ljeviška's face: / O Prizren within Prizren, bestow the honour of entry upon us." To invigorate in ourselves the union of the present and the absent, the victorious blend against the blows visible and invisible. To suffer through, to the end – I say to my impetuous and ratty self. Anything else means to succumb to demons. And I keep repeating this, so as to sound more convincing to myself.

Translated from Serbian by
Angelina Čanković Popović

¹⁸ English translation taken over from: Carl Gustav Jung: "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious" in: *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, edited and translated by Gerhard Adler & R.F.C. Hull, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1968, Vol. 9, Part I, p.28. – *Translator's note*.

LJILJANA PEŠIKAN LJUŠTANOVIĆ

FROM HISTORY TO LEGEND SEEN
BY NENAD LJUBINKOVIĆ

The book by Nenad Ljubinković *From the Battle of Kosovo to the Legend of Kosovo* was a great choice for the Kosovo Metohija Committee of Matica srpska to publish for its first edition. Because Nenad Ljubinković, both as a scientist and as a man, joins the characteristics that are often separated – true human passion, lucidity and imagination with scientific approach, research systematism and extremely good education. If they are right, and I believe they are, Lotman and Uspensky, claiming that the human brain is organized in such a way that one part of it always belongs to the domain of mythical thinking and the other one to the logically rational one and that poetics is the link that connects these two, Nenad does the ideal job for the man who knows perfectly well what the ancient myth is (moreover, when I speak of myth I refer to a sacred story, not a lie and mystification) – the domain of the legendary – but also the domain of historical, as a system of verified, proven on fact-based sources, and at the same time he has the imagination, passion and courage to make the connections between them. I also find that the author made really precious decision cleaning the texts in the book from the extensive and detailed scientific apparatus they had in the first appearance. So “facilitated”, his book becomes a read that will be gladly read by every educated reader interested in the Kosovo issue, and honestly I cannot imagine anyone who does not care about this issue at this moment.

One of the major contributions of this book is the sovereign connecting of the domains of legendary and historical. The deceased academician Svetozar Koljević said, at one time, in the text published in *The Matica srpska Yearbook* that anachronism and anatopism in the oral epic and tradition are not only the consequences of forgetting, but

they are, above all, the procedures in epic stylization. Epic truth does not have to rest upon the truthfulness of the events. It is that Aristotelian truth which is based on the laws of probability and necessity and, I would say, a certain kind of functionality. Nenad's book illuminates very well the way legend meets certain human needs. On the one hand, these were the needs of the Christian people, who found themselves confronted with something that was experienced as biblical pestilence: people of another faith coming, conquering, and destroying the places of worship, attacking the very foundations of spirituality and survival. Then there is the Turkish legend and the need to incorporate the death of the ruler into the foundations of his empire, to functionalize it to the fullest extent. There is also the logic of the Russian ruler Ivan the Terrible, who was a Serb by his mother, who included the cult of Saint Sava and Saint Simeon, as well as the story of Kosovo in the basics of his ruling ideology.

Nenad's essential contribution to this book is, above all, demonstrating the complexity of the legend of Kosovo. Not only are there Turkish, Christian and local legends, but they also independently, diversify further. The Christian legend is the legend of Prince Lazar, and no matter how much Nenad assigned this aspect to Vuk, I would say that it is the legend that dates from the time of the Uprising. The great turn should have been made in the Uprising where something that has been experienced as "the final hour", as the end, the end of the world is suddenly being transformed into the victory, it should have been resolved, how to get out of the final hour into a new success, how a once-fallen empire could be re-founded.

That was solved by the blind poet Filip Visnjić, specially mentioned and apostrophized at the very end of the book. It is with great pleasure that I share Nenad's conviction that Filip Visnjić and Miliša and most of Vuk's singers were in fact great poets. At the same time, Nenad, in his research and remaking the puzzle to the details, shows how scarce, unreliable and sensitive the historical evidence is. In this remodeling the mosaic he will show us that some of the things we liked to believe were not true. So, for example, those bells at Notre Dame, apparently, seemed to ring for the battle of Rovine and not for the battle of Kosovo. He will suggest us to rethink of something that we learned in our studies as a typical example of the legend being written down into history, and the typical example is the rifleman Jerga's story about the quarrel of Lazar's sons-in-law. Nenad asks a question why the story of the conflict at Lazar's court would not be true. He reminds that the son-in-law does not necessarily have to be daughter's husband, but also might be a sister's husband (relative coming from the female line, Serbian son-in-law), and that Vuk Branković, Mr Vuk, took the town which

they possessed from the Musićs, Lazar's nephews, indicating that those conflicts must have occurred.

In essence, Nenad Ljubinkovic shows, and that is the basis of his lucidity, the ability to cast doubt onto generally accepted conclusions, but also to accept and consider impartially all known segments. His data on Turkish testimonials are very valuable because they show how these myths, apparently different, essentially match. The death of the warlord should be transformed into a triumph, and that's what the Kosovo legend is doing.

On the other hand, he shows how, in his opinion, Vuk builds the myth of the defamed hero, which is, by the way, universal in the world epic, (the author himself gives the example of Roland, who was historically relatively insignificant petty nobleman, but the epic and legend gave him the role of a defamed hero, while the traitor, again understandably, became the first and the most powerful emperor's right-hand man and son-in-law – Ganelon). Typical for the oral epic in general is the category of a hero who has been slandered, and who proves his own necessity. This myth is at the very core of Njegoš's *Mountain Wreath*.

It is extremely encouraging for future researchers to point out the true nature of local legends. Such, for example, is the story of a woman, as a "standing traitor", of a lower, Htonian female deity – an old woman – who is a match to the god of thunder, and, at times, his wife, and the solar hero – Obilić. Obilić's solar nature is perhaps best confirmed by the fact that his opponent is an old woman, the one who, according to a number of local legends, tells the Turks how they can defeat him. Njegoš omits the saga of the old woman, but he makes, from the solar nature of Obilić, some of the most beautiful images of the 19th-century Serbian poetry. He is that holy warrior who ascends into the knightly realm of poetry and reigns there over the shadows, as the final triumph of the sun warrior.

Nenad shows and this is what fascinates me most, how these legends contribute the consolidation of a Russian dynasty in its ideology, how they help to show and prove its spiritual sublimation. At each step, he demonstrates characteristics necessary for the researcher in this field: resistance to the ambivalence, to contradiction. Any interpretation of the legend of Kosovo that clearly explains everything to the end, as we can see from Nenad's book, is always doubtful. It is doubtful because it does not fit into the spirit of tradition.

The part of the book that deals with the Branković's betrayal I find particularly interesting, because I was actively dealing with the Brankovićs in a really long period of time (true, with the other heroes). Nenad, I believe, is quite right when saying that Catholic propaganda had a large share in producing the legend of the Branković's betrayal.

Catholic Bishop Andrija Zmajević says about the despot Đurađ Branković that he was extremely disobedient to the Holy Father, despite the fact that St. John Capistran used to try to persuade him to accept obedience and compliance to the pope, so that “even today” he is called “the infidel despot of Đurđe”. That story about the Branković’s unfaithfulness is also very complex because the latest saints come from the Serbian dynastic families Branković, which shows how this story is relative.

That relativity of oral stories and the ability to move within them, and to move with a kind of passion, an inquisitive curiosity and the ability to spot the fact, to point to it, is repeatedly expressed by Nenad Ljubinković in his book *From the Battle of Kosovo to the Legend of Kosovo*. This book is also interesting for it shows without any passion how and how much the Albanian tradition has contributed to the formation of the stories about Kosovo, how from the myth of Sin Đon (John Vladimir), some parts have been incorporated into the myth of our Holy Prince Lazar (there are holy martyrs of cephalophores both among Christians and Muslims).

This is the book that shows the author’s personal dialogue with a great, not only scientific, but also a great national dilemma: why to celebrate the battle that ended in defeat. Nenad gives a sovereign answer – the nation who sings about its earthly defeats has nothing to be ashamed of. Defeat is the theme of poetry. Imagine what world poetry would be like if all the stories of pain, death, discouragement were left out – then poetry would be virtually nonexistent. He will also point out the exclusivity of certain scientific theories; he will show what is partially true in Srem theory. (This is the theory that the Kosovo legend, according to Matić, was formed here in Vojvodina, Srem, and has practically nothing to do with Serbia.)

Nenad, with a sovereign knowledge of spiritual and intellectual space across which he moves, makes his reader think about a number of extremely important and significant scientific topics: for example, about the merging of these two circles of Kosovo poems, although the Serbian position in the two Kosovo battles was significantly different. Đurađ Branković refused to enter the Second battle of Kosovo – he just restored a despotate which had already been fallen once, his sons who went blind returned, he made peace with the help of his daughter Mara that was necessary for Serbia because Serbia was in a very difficult position between the two great adversaries of different faiths (non-Orthodox Christians and Muslims) and different according to their political interests, none of whom saw Serbian interests properly. Đurađ decides not to enter the Second Kosovo battle, and shows – however impressive Janoš Hunjadi’s will and the ability to fight the Turks in any situation was – that the battle was poorly planned and

poorly conducted. In one poem, written (or sung?) by the teacher, this painful dilemma is formulated as follows: “On fire Đura stays to be roasted alive, / Neither with the Turks nor with the Hungarians/ as he lost the trust of both.”

The legend of Kosovo Nenad writes about transforms all that tragic, contradictory, difficult historical experience into a story it is possible to live with, turning it into the basis of a good sense of self. In one poem from the *Bosnian villa*, which I really love, even though it belongs to so called post epic chronicle, all those people connected to the battle of Kosovo sit around the figure of Prince Lazar – on the right is Miloš Obilić, Banović Strahinja and nine Jugović’s brothers-in-law, dear father-in-law the old Jug Bogdan. The prince holds his dear grandson in his lap, of course, this is Janko Sibirjan, because, according to our legend, he is the son of Stefan Lazarević, and next to him is the child Sekula.

That image, however historically unrealistic, shows how, in the most difficult times when Kosovo poems were written, in times of very serious historical breakdowns, from something that really is a great misfortune, from something that is difficult, contradictory, torturous losing, the basis for self-awareness is created, a spiritual family is created that both the individual and the people can rely on. Whether the Kosovo legend will help us at this time I do not know, but we must preserve it not only for the sake of the folk song, but also because of Njegoš, because of all those things it poured over, what is permeated in the spiritual building which is an essential part of the Serbian identity.*

Translated from Serbian by
Ljubica Jankov

* Spoken at the Matica srpska at the promotion of Nenad Ljubinković’s book *From the Battle of Kosovo to the Legend of Kosovo* (Matica srpska, Novi Sad 2018), in Novi Sad, December 24th, 2018

NENAD LJUBINKOVIĆ

THE ORIGIN OF THE EPIC LEGEND

The interview was moderated by Branko Zlatković
and Aleksandra Novakov

Nenad Ljubinković (1940) is a full research professor and full professor at Belgrade University of Arts. He graduated, received his master's and doctoral degrees at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade. He has published the following monographs: *Oral Literature of the Yugoslav Nations*, Belgrade 1978, Seoul 1995; *Montenegrin and Herzegovinian Singing of Sima Milutinović Sarajlija*, Belgrade 2000; *Quests and Answers – Studies in Literature and Folklore* (1), Belgrade 2010; *The First Serbian Uprising – From History to the “National History” and its Oral Mythisation* (co-authored with Mirjana Drndarski), Belgrade-Orašac, 2012; *Our Distant Ancestors*, Belgrade 2014; *From the Battle of Kosovo to the Legend of Kosovo*, Novi Sad 2018. He is the author of over 400 discussions, studies, articles and reviews, as well as several anthologies of oral folk art. He has received multiple awards and honours.

The newly formed Kosovo and Metohija Committee of Matica srpska, as its first edition, has published the book *From the Battle of Kosovo to the Battle of Kosovo* by Nenad Ljubinković. This work has received a lot of interest from the audience, both at the Belgrade Book Fair, 2018 and before and after the book presentation in Matica srpska. The book is an occasion for an interview with the author Nenad Ljubinković.

In the “Note on the Origin of the Book” you state that the book was written in 1989, why have you not published it until today?

Nenad Ljubinković: The book was written in 1989, and according to the agreement the publisher was supposed to be KIZ "Culture" (owned by Aca Jovanović). During June-July of that year, the publisher ran ads for the book and called for the subscriptions. However, in September of the same year, he got into serious troubles for the translation of the third volume of General Zhukov's memoir was late. Since the first two printed volumes could not be released without the third one, he got into financial crisis. Respecting the gentleman's agreement, I didn't want to look for another publisher at that time. Then the ugly and evil years came. I felt that I should not allow my book to be used or misused in any way, which happened at that time too often. As that book was resolved and completed for me, at least, I turned to other problems. Thanking to lectures in folklorology at the Music Academy or, as they like to say, at the Faculty of Music Art, I have devoted myself completely to the Serbian and Balkan ethno-mythology. The book on the battle of Kosovo and the legend was pushed aside, and the ugly years continued. I haven't felt any significant changes for a long time. Honestly, I haven't felt much change later. With the founding of the Kosovo Metohija Committee at Matica Srpska, which in the relatively recent and closer past meant a great deal to some former members of my family, I decided (thanks to a dear friend) to offer the manuscript of the book to Matica. I am extremely grateful that Matica srpska showed understanding.

What did you want to express with your book?

I tried to show on a very illustrative example how an epic legend is actually being created. My colleagues, who are dealing with what they call folk literature, and what I refer to in the broader context as folklorology, believe that an epic legend is created directly inspired by a particular historical event. The historical event is the cause, but the epic legend comes from the political needs. I'm sorry, but I think Allen Dandes, one of the creators of the theory of so-called fake folklore (*fakelore*) did not understand the essence of *fakelore*. He was thinking of forgeries, the so-called counterfeiting. He did not understand how political and similar reasons can affect the creation of something intended for the people, expressed even in the same vernacular, not being really vernacular, but something people should accept and adopt as their own. Such a procedure is recognized today in the media worldwide. And of course in our country as well. By deliberate propaganda, you "teach" the people what they should think. This may be done in an ugly and recognizable way, as Filip Grabovac used to do in our country, or with a sincere belief in the validity of one's own act, as Andrija Kačić Miošić

used to do once on the same premises. The sincerity and spontaneity of his forgery also fooled, for example, a connoisseur of folk oral creations such as Vuk Karadžić. So, I tried to show where the Kosovo legend really started. Short, scanty, vague news. Obviously, neither the participants of the battle, nor the spectators, knew what had actually happened. Then political thinking, contemplations and considerations started. The opposing sides started figuring out how to make the most of what had happened. In my opinion, the Serbian side won the battle; they remained on the battlefield, The Turks left it in a hurry. The battle had been won for the Serbs, but at the same time and at the same scene the war had been lost. This was Pyrrhic victory, and after the battle, too expensively paid victory, the vultures appeared on the scene, the ones who wanted to exploit other people's troubles at all costs. Both the Hungarians and King Tvrtko expressed aspirations for Serbian lands. The Serbian side, Lazar's widow and the Serbian church, decided to portray the battle of Kosovo so that it admonish both as a whole, and in detail, the suffering of Christ for the redeeming of all sins which have been committed so far, while also emphasizing the ancient belief in the necessity of building the human sacrifice into the foundations of a future new structure. The Turkish side had a similar mindset, and they believed that Murat consciously sacrificed himself and built himself into the foundations of the future Ottoman Empire as a shahid. Then both the "historical story" of the battle of Kosovo and the legend were complemented and enriched by the involvement of both conflicting parties. The conflicts that took place over the decades that followed were also added to the battle of Kosovo in 1389 and to the legend of Kosovo which was based on it. In this regard, of particular importance are: the siege of the large mining and trading center – Novo Brdo and the battles around it and, of course, the Second battle of Kosovo in 1448.

It seems you wanted to correct or explain some of the historical misconceptions or mistakes that historians have made.

It is true. First of all, I wanted to remind fellow historians of the fact which they otherwise know better than me. Prince Lazar was not the King of Serbia, nor the autocrat, as they often state. In 1377, in the Mileševa Monastery, above the relics of Saint Sava, Bosnian King Tvrtko I was crowned in the presence of Prince Lazar, therefore with his consent, for the king and Serbia. This further means that in the battle of Kosovo, not the two rulers were killed, but just one – Sultan Murat, but the two generals: commander in chief of the Christian army Prince Lazar, and commander of the Anatolian troops, the second Murat's son, Jakub Čelebija. Tvrtko did not participate in the battle, but his

auxiliary troops were led by the Duke Vlatko Vuković, who had completely defeated the Turkish army at Bileća a year before.

Then I wanted to prove that Miloš Kobilović or Kobilić was a historical figure, to indicate where his residence was, his fortress city (above the Mileševa monastery). Finally, I tried to explain what the factual situation was like with so-called betrayal of Vuk Branković, as well as with the alleged betrayal of his son, despot Đurađ in the Second Battle of Kosovo. Vuk Branković did not betray Prince Lazar, because the Battle of Kosovo took place on the premises of Vuk's state, so he would have betrayed himself. But the truth is that he did not follow the policy of his mother-in-law, Lazar's widow Milica. In that sense, he was a traitor, but a traitor who continued to fight the Turks. His son, the despot Đurađ, did not participate in the Second Battle of Kosovo because he respected the ten-year truce that Christians made with the Turks. He did not inform the Turkish Sultan of the intended military attack on Murat the Second, but he warned his son-in-law, the husband of his daughter, Sultaness Mara. The second Battle of Kosovo was pretty shamefully escaped by the military commander Janko Hunjadi, leaving part of the army to be massacred.

I also wanted to explain the important reasons behind something called *propaganda fide* in historiography: it was a deliberate action to convert the Orthodox population inhabited in parts of the Austrian Empire bordering the Ottoman Empire into Catholicism. The action began in an organized manner at the end of the sixteenth and was very obvious in the early seventeenth century. Unlike fellow historians who have only words of patriotic praise for the actions of the great vizier Mehmed-Pasha Sokolović, and who, through the prism of national euphoria, understand his restoration of the Patriarchate of Peć and the appointment of a close relative Makarije as a patriarch – I'm not inclined to such an insight into the events. I think, in fact, that the Mehmed Pasha Sokolović restored very deliberately, with a pronounced consent of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, the Peć Patriarchate, bearing in mind the sultan's ambitions to penetrate eastwards towards Vienna. By then, the Austrian empire was settling deliberately refugees from the Orthodox regions of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina on the border with the Ottoman Empire, believing, naturally, that the refugees would be a reliable protective, defensive rampart. Restoration of Serbian independent church in the Ottoman Empire in future could, with considerable probability, change the mood of the new border guards so that a reliable rampart at some point becomes (at least partially) "The Fifth Column". Then started long, thought-out Catholic campaign designed to proclaim the Serbs traitors, to mark their leaders as such, to let them know that they are the eternal traitors of the true (Catholic!) Christian faith.

They must always be aware of that sin; they must atone for it, but never enough and to the end. The appearance of the self-proclaimed despot Đorđe Branković, who wanted to restore a distinctive Serbian state on the Turkish territories, firstly suited the Viennese court, which even recognized that he was the lawful heir to the Branković ruling family. However, after the unfortunate Great Migration of Serbs, the political situation changed fundamentally. Đorđe Branković's ambitions could not be realized within the Turkish Empire, but they could theoretically be realized on the territory of the Austrian Empire, thanks to the large number of newly settled Serbs. That should not have been allowed even in its beginnings. The supposed despot was arrested, first imprisoned in Kladovo and then died in captivity.

You also write that the legend of Kosovo not only was it not unique, but it seems as if there were many different ones.

That's what I insist on. Our problem is that by the merit or, otherwise, by the responsibility of Vuk Karadžić, we are referring to the legend of Kosovo as of something we can read about in the folk songs about the battle of Kosovo from his second book of *Serbian Folk Songs* of the Viennese edition. The problem is that it is a religious variant of the Kosovo legend in whose focus is Prince Lazar, his imitation of Jesus Christ, opting for a kingdom of heaven, etc. It is a version of the Kosovo legend created by the Serbian church right after Lazar being killed, and in the effort to help the Lazarevićs in their attempts to keep Lazar's land. In this context, with the wholeheartedly help of Lazar's widow, who also sought to proclaim Lazar a saint. Vuk received the songs partly from Lukian Mušicki, and partly he wrote them down. The records, except for the poem "The Death of the Jugović Mother" (recorded in Slavonia), came from Srem. They were recorded in the vicinity, more precisely in the churchyard of the so-called Ravanica of Srem, or Vrdnik, where after the Great Migration Lazar's relics were finally enshrined. The songs were nurtured and protected by the church. It went so far that blind male and female singers did not change the text whose meaning they did not understand. Vuk asked in vain both from the priests and Mušicki, who wrote down some songs, for the explanation: what *kolasta azdija* (long, red cloak) means, what *burma pozlaćena* (gilded wedding ring) means, etc. In the churchyard, on the holy land, interventions in the text were not allowed. A religious version of the Kosovo legend lived earlier, certainly in Serbian Ravanica, probably in Milica's endowment Ljubostinja as well, and it is logical to expect that they were respected and nurtured in other endowments of the dynasty Lazarević. However, in addition to this, to us, the most famous, even the only known Kosovo legend,

there is a contradictory one that focuses on Miloš Kobilić, his vow and the murder of the Sultan. It should be pointed out that in the Christian framework there are two versions – the Eastern (Orthodox) and the Western one. In addition to these ones there is a local, so-called regional version, related just to Kosovo and its toponyms. Even the Islamic version of the Kosovo legend is not unique. The official Turkish court version and the writing of Persian chroniclers and poets are contrasted significantly. The latter, for example, accuse Bajazit of double murder – the father and the brother. Advocating for the existence of several different legends about the Kosovo battle, which occasionally merge, I particularly pointed to the problem of the so-called non-historical Jugovići. I emphasized that they belong, in my opinion, to the lost cycle of Novo Brdo. In an effort to prove this, I wrote that the Jugovići were the prominent nobility of Novo Brdo: Bogdan Jugo and Vojin Jugo (the Law on Mines of Despot Stefan Lazarević), and that Milica, among other titles, had the title of contessa di Monta Nuovo – Mistress of Novo Brdo. I note, though this is not directly related to the Kosovo legend, how Novo Brdo was heroically defended by the Duke of Prijezda. The folk song will later tie his name to the heroic defense of Stalać.

It is little known to the general public that you are the grandson of Vladimir, but also of Svetozar Ćorović, and that Jovan Skerlić was your great-uncle. How much did this possibly affect your polemical tone, mentioned by colleagues when talking about you and your works?

It certainly is the matter of temperament, though there are the other reasons as well. Namely, during my studies, every year, on the fourth of April, I was called or named, as you wish, as the “grandson of the bloody rector”. At the seminars I was asked what I thought of Skerlić’s assessments of Dis’s poetry or Isidora Sekulić’s prose. In the second part of the diploma exam, Professor Velibor Gligorić, among others, asked me a question about Skerlić’s assessment of Dis’s poetry. I reacted in accordance with my then twenty-two years and chronic anger. I replied that Dis’s poetry absolutely shook up that Skerlić who was in tune with Bora’s *Koštana*, and that he needed almost twenty printed pages to deal with it, and for Gligorije Sokoljanin [otherwise, Velibor Gligorić’s father – note by B. Z. and A. N.] he just needed a page and a half to liquidate his prose. Then I got one of the life slaps from the professor I will always remember – I got the highest mark. I still blush today when I think of it.

Many professors have often reproached me for not respecting authority sufficiently. When I was sharply criticized for that, I replied that I was taught since my very young age that authority does not exist

by itself, but is proven by actions and meaningful words. As a kid, I had the honour of being bounced on the knees of Bogdan Popović and Tihomir Đorđević (others told me that, I do not remember), but I remember very well Ivan Đaja, whom I pulled for his beard, Milutin Milanković, Isidora Sekulić, etc. They all spoke to me without affectations, patiently explaining what I needed to understand. They have taught me that authority is not established by title, age or reputation, but it is, or is not-a specific person.

When I look back, I think I was too angry and autarchic when I was younger. Sometimes with an obvious reason, and pretty often without it. I had quite a bit of trouble because of that. I remember two of my reviews, or my two critics, which have caused me problems for decades. In 1968, I wrote a review on a survey conducted by the editorial board for the publication of Vuk's Collected Works. I know it wasn't necessary, but I would still sign the text today. It confronted me with a good part of the department I graduated from. The second text was written regarding the *Serbian Mythological Dictionary*. The critique had a provocative, murderous title "Neither Serbian, nor Mythological, nor Dictionary." I would sign it even today with clear conscience, but because of it, I took very serious offence at many colleagues ethnologists. I didn't learn my lesson instantaneously. I continued to write reviews and critiques in *Literary History* systematically, and for almost two decades afterwards in *Raskovnik*, none of which my colleagues did systematically. I quitteed when I was told that I praise friends while discredit people who think differently from me. The irony is that it was said as a reaction to my critique of the excellent book written by a man who, some fifteen years earlier, viciously attacked me for my criticism of his (and my) colleague's book, on the double page of the magazine *Odjek*, on so called sheet. The mid-nineties was clearly the wrong political moment for positive criticism. I am not sorry. And besides the "afterthought" I would do it again.

It is considered that you are not too fond of professors, although from 1970 until your retirement you were very active in that profession.

Absolutely correct. Frequently, when I am provoked, I point out that I did not like teachers and professors (with rare, truly honourable exceptions) as a schoolboy, and later I did not like them as a student (although even then there was "Daddy Vido" Latković, Raško Dimitrijević, and Nikola Banašević...). When I stood on the other side of the desk, I became fully aware of why I did not love teachers or professors at any age. The reason is extremely simple. In most cases, they do not respect young people (because they are no longer young and will not be);

they abuse the position to prove their own presumed superiority. The basic thing is to warn you: as I had said it! Repeat as a parrot; learn to have no opinion, to have no attitude. I used to give the highest marks to students (both male and female) who had their own opinion, opposite to mine. After writing down the grade and giving the index back to the student, I asked him to stay for a few minutes to explain to him what I thought he was doing wrong or what he/she should take care of. As a rule, the conversation was followed by the question: if I was wrong in all that, why I got the highest grade? My answer was always the same: facts can be learned, but it is difficult to train someone to think with one's own head, and for years one listened to the professor's "the way I said it".

Translated from Serbian by
Ljubica Jankov

MARJAN ČAKAREVIĆ

SHEEP, LUDWIG and SAMURAI

Vladimir Tabašević, *The Delusions of St. Sebastian*,
Laguna, Belgrade 2018

I heard about Vladimir Tabašević for the first time that year when he received the award for his debutante poetic manuscript in Zaječar. More precisely, the news of the behaviour of the winner came to me before his very name, which, as far as I was able to connect from various sources, was opposite to the conventional festival phenomena. But more interesting than the event itself, was the attitude of older colleagues: although it is very modern to refer to avant-garde literary practices, when something like this – which might be addressed to the colleague at the beginning of his career with some spirit and goodwill, and understood as such a gesture – happens in our most immediate vicinity, then we are blind, deaf and, moreover, offended by it. It is as if we love the literary and artistic avant-garde more the further we are from it.

When I met Tabašević right after that, he gave me the impression of a basically endlessly polite, smart and fast guy, and about his appearances at common poetic activities we organized at the time the most striking thing about him for me was his breathlessness while reading his poetry. The poet took his breath at the beginning of his reading and did not release it until the very end of the performance: as if he was not reading, but diving somewhere deep down into it.

Shortly after his initial appearances, Tabašević and four of his colleagues formed the poetry-theoretical group *Caché*, or “hidden,” named after Michael Haneke’s film with the same title, and the basic thesis of the film, just to remind ourselves, could be, to put it simply,

reduced to the fact that – every happy society, and especially civil society, rests on a crime that (is) being unsaid. The artistic practice of the Caché group meant firstly the self-publishing of deliberately uncatalogued books of poetry, and then giving them to all interested readers who came to the common performances of the group. So nothing more than that: it was just a matter of moving your butt, taking a walk, listening to the performance, and then getting the books for free; in a word: one needed to be an *active* reader, one needed to participate.

Within the edition of the group Caché, Tabašević published two, i.e. three books, the first of which – *Tragus* – starts with the verses: “dad’s tie is a knife/ the death attacked him by”, while in the second – *Rifle Butt* – there are verses, which even now give me creeps as when I first read them, and which go: “Forced as your colourless boy / Mother my body rots from bruises / Revive me, Mother / Something lasts in me and it is not a butt”. In the title of this book, as well as in the aforementioned verses, not only the coordinates of the prose worlds are set up, which Tabašević will shape in the novel *The Mississippi Flows Quietly*, then, to somehow lesser extent, in his next novel *However, As* and concluding with *The Misconception of St. Sebastian*, they already contain the basic existential drama of both his lyrical and prose characters. Because what is crucial here is that closed bracket, which precedes the word “butt”, and which, it seems, can open up to the endless past, since there are always bruises and wounds that need to be healed. But actually, the more important question is how to overcome those pains, how to cope with your own self, or rather: how not to be tempted to put that butt onto your shoulder.

Isn’t that mentioned drama included in the words from the introductory monologue of the protagonist of *The Misconception of Saint Sebastian*: “I would kill so gladly. It’s all the same, permanently. (...) I have baby teeth forever, which is my deal with memory, my greatest slavery, the biggest monster.” Thus, from the opening sentences in front of the inner eyes of the reader, the world of childhood grows and flourishes, a world skewed, disintegrated and stirred up, as is the language in which it is described highly poeticized and amazing. So the world of childhood, which must always have the right to be a childhood and which always wants to explore, to play and learn the language. That is why the main character of the novel explores, digs through the language, plays with it, twists it, juggles with the words and their meanings. In fact, children learn their mother tongue for a long time, so the first half of the novel is devoted, among other things, to language learning. And learning, and especially language learning, cannot be expedient unless mistakes are made. Hence, we can find in the novel all those seeming illogicalities and language slippages. But it’s not just that: there is also

a mysterious tension there in the language, a rush, choking, some kind of great agitation, as if the narrator is afraid that he will not be able to express everything that needs to be said, and that is why certain parts of the sentence, the phrases, seem to jump over each other, changing places. It is as if there is an aspiration, an unattainable, and powerlessness – to establish order, to put the words where they belong according to the logic of grammar and grammatical rules, but it seems as if there is some force preventing that. This powerlessness is actually the powerlessness to restore the family, which is the paradise of every childhood and comfort in the later life.

There is, however, something else that significantly destabilizes the world of childhood, and that is a wide range of ironic effects: from those truly childish ones imposed by the sound of words and the associative sequence they evoke, through mild humor, to sharp sarcastic remarks. And since childhood does not know about irony, it becomes clear that it is a subsequent reconstruction, no matter whether it is a memory or a narrative, that is, the artistic revival of an early age.

Carlo, or Dino, is actually trying to cope with his life, partly by trying to cope with his past. He wants to overcome himself as a victim, and he can only do so by facing the war. And firstly, through the war within his own family, and then by the war which destroyed the family, and which also destroyed his language, permanently disrupted the order of words in his sentences; with that war that ours, as well as any other society, which wants to be happy – wish it hadn't happened.

The main character overcomes this through different, very complex, love and other relationships realized with the other characters in the novel. Among others, with Emma, who, believing that she is doing good and sacrificing herself to sacred art, wants to tell the story of his life, just as he himself wants to. And that readable relationship, just like the one in the movie *Titanic*, even through the prism of class relations, is full of turnovers, faith in the illusion, suffering for that faith.

And there is another relationship with a distinct cashier Sofia, where the roles are changed, so that the main character, who has always been in the position of the victim, as if now passes to the other side of the sword. Or the arrow. Or lots of arrows sticking into the victim's back, and then that victim, to someone watching from afar, let's say as a piece of art, looks like a hedgehog. That hedgehog that is at the root of the verb "bristle" and which at first glance seems strange in the dedication to this novel. And this is the same hedgehog that is on the cover of this book. And there is also a rooster called Sheep, a house called Ludwig, a solitary, or a "solitary confinement," which the hero calls Samurai, because in it he exercises his body and spirit in the harsh self-discipline

of the samurai, that is, the Samurai room, which can also be divided into the syllables, so you get Alone-in-paradise. (Sam-u-raj)

In other words, in the novel *The Delusions of St. Sebastian*, everything is in constant motion and transformation: every relationship is unstable and polyvalent, each character has its own double, every word echoes somewhere and has a mirror, and beneath every sentence and episode is not just a double bottom but entire abysses of the possible meanings, not only one direction in experiencing and understanding, but real circular flows.

Vladimir Tabašević has remained consistent on this level: and this novel of his, like the books of poetry from several years ago, looks for the readers who will make that crucial effort to get up from their chairs. Or perhaps it is more precise to say that he is looking for a companion and a friend ready to embark on an adventure. Well, how far they will reach is disputable – at least they will know that they have tried.*

Translated from Serbian by
Ljubica Jankov

* Speech at the NIN award ceremony for the best novel in 2018

ALEKSANDAR JOVANOVIĆ

THE HORROR OF THE BANAL WORLD

Vladimir Kecmanović, “War Games”, in: *As in a Room with Mirrors*, Belgrade: Laguna, 2017, p. 191–197

In its decision, the jury for the Andrić Award gave its view on the story “War Games”, in which are presented concisely two reasons why it was singled out from the last year’s numerous short stories and story collections. The first of these refers to the writer’s procedure. Namely, illuminating our time in a grotesque-ironical way, he firstly distorts and then disarranges it, in order to enlighten it from the inside, and thus to show its most important properties. With very little freedom, Vladimir Kecmanović confirms himself, using modern literary process, as a *modern realistic writer*. And the second one, the explanation talks about the writer’s skewed view into the discrepancies, misunderstandings and conflicts between Balkan identities and their owners. This view is applied not only to the award-winning short story, but also to the previous works of this year’s winner: the jury awarded a single story but also one of the most prominent and the most recognizable prose writers of the last decade. And, the third reason, which the jury (or, at least, me) might not have been aware of at first: when it comes to the story of identities and when the writer is from Bosnia, then we already are, willing it or not, in the lobby, or even, in our Nobel laureate’s study.

The award-winning story “War Games” is located somewhere in the vicinity of Belgrade, at the beginning of this century, let’s say, when some kind of contact was established between our old nations and the new states so that it was possible to travel for fun. Its content is shown

in its title: *war games* on a clearing, no matter whether on the imagined or the former military training ground. The players are relatively successful business people, a new class from Belgrade, Zagreb, Tuzla, assigned to teams / military units of English, Russians, Americans, hungry for war and games and not caring too much, or not at all, for the recent war and the war traumas. In order to give the war game an illusion of seriousness, it must have been given a military instructor, former lieutenant colonel of Yugoslav Army, Slobodan who is retired, maneuvering ammunition and a proper ending at the pub table. It is written in the author's style: using simple and concise sentences, with numerous short paragraphs (followed by that well-known computer key), not even too long. There are no developed descriptions, psychological portraits of the characters, almost no characters (they were formerly people, for this occasion, in their roles), and there are no essayistic parts.

We almost ask ourselves: what is the story here? That is the moment, I think, when the story actually begins. Short dialogue passages carry within themselves a great narrative energy stored in the many oppositions that are realized in them. The first opposition is between the game and reality: people who travel for hours to disguise and supposedly shoot on the clearings, and on the other hand we have their professional jobs as lawyers, architects. The other opposition is between the *war games* and recently ended war, precisely between the nations to whom the passionate warriors belong. There are, indeed, quite a lot of them. Perhaps meaningfully the most important, but indistinguishable from the other ones, determining the character of the protagonist and based on what he was and what he is: the officer in the recent war and the instructor in this humiliating game for him. His being is still fighting, and he feels what he is doing now is evidently insulting his former soldiers, among whom there are probably some dead ones as well. That is where his defiance or spoilage of the game he was paid to organize come from:

Coloneeel, you didn't put a helmet, shouted a young man standing next to Lieutenant Colonel Slobodan.

I diiiidn't haveeee it even when the shooting was real, the Lieutenant Colonel yelled.

You dooon't have the body armour either, the young man shouted.

Not even iiiit, the lieutenant colonel yelled.

Or, a little later, after the war happening was over:

Mind – the instructor, and he hardly moves. Senile old man.
Watch your mouth, boy, Lieutenant Colonel Slobodan said sharply. I'm not a Colonel, but I'm a Lieutenant Colonel. Unlike you who didn't even get to the rank of lieutenant.
I didn't, because I realized on time that the thing had broken, Tankosić said. And you're going to be swept away, Lieutenant Colonel.

His psychological portrait is reinforced (still, there are some portraits there) two or three more splendidly specified details: the double brandy the waiter brings him without asking and this hired relationship of his, conditioned by his family situation. But not just them.

The reader first met Lieutenant Colonel Slobodan as a captain, in the story "Evil Soldier Matjaž", before the war began, in 1991, in the barracks in an unnamed place, at a time when his world, as well as the army to which he was loyal with his whole being, was unstoppably and seemingly instantly collapsing. The epilogue of this story takes our hero through the war ("Not even a year later... while Slobodan, the captain of the YNA was trying to unblock a column that had already been massacred") until the post-war *war games* ("- not many years later, until... the retired Lieutenant Colonel Slobodan <will> train idlers who play war games"). The story "Evil Soldier Matjaž" gives "War Games" and its main protagonist considerable depth, which without it could only be foreseen. Only now we can understand the previous dialogues and, in general, the entire lieutenant-colonel's hateful behaviour, as well as his final reaction – the great point of the story:

He toasted them standing up.
Cheers, he murmured quietly.
And as they turned their back to him, even quieter, to himself:
Fuck you the one who terminated your military service

In this *termination of military service* is contained the horror and, to put it bluntly, the disgust of a retired senior officer in front of a collapsing world, but, and independently of the shading his character, the suggested image of the world which was affected by complete entropy. A picture of a world where the distinction between sublimity and banality, truth and post-truth, credibility and illusion, play and tragedy, dignity and degradation is being abolished. In this universal alignment, the only two names in the story are stultified: the colonel's libertarian name and the assistant's surname. One world has been spun in its twisted logic, which is established in its depth and which breaks all the authenticity and consistency.

And this is not the end of possible readings of “War Games”, but it is time to put an end to the explanation. Distinguished by the Andrić Award, the story of Vladimir Kecmanović – in the collection whose title names not only its space but the prose procedure as well – was able to see in an unfulfilling and insignificant event a deep and abysmal picture of today’s world, banal and terrifying at the same time.*¹

Translated from Serbian by
Ljubica Jankov

* Speech at the Andrić Award ceremony for best short story in 2017

CRNJANSKI, A FOREIGNER IN HIS OWN CULTURE

Milo Lompar, *Crnjanski – The Biography of a Feeling*, Orthodox Word, Novi Sad 2018

Having devoted himself to the work of Petar Petrović Njegoš¹ in his two previous monographs, Milo Lompar returned to his “youthful love” – Miloš Crnjanski. In his earlier books when writing on the classics of our modernism, he approached his work from different angles: in the study *On the Completion of the Novel* (1995; the second, revised edition 2008), he examined not only the meaning of the completion of *The Second Book of the Migrations*, as it was indicated in the subtitle, but also much broader issue of Miloš Crnjanski’s writing procedures and narrative techniques; in the book *Crnjanski and Mephistopheles* 2000; (the second, revised edition, 2007) he analyzed the immanent presence of the devil in the *Novel about London*; in *Apollo’s Signposts* (2004), he combined Gadamer’s hermeneutics and Foucault’s poststructuralism to interpret the hidden meanings of Crnjanski’s texts, but also his paradoxical status in our culture. In his latest book, he continued, we might say, where he had stopped almost a decade and a half ago.

Judging by the title, Lompar started dealing with the genre of biography, but that expectation is shattered quickly. Although the events are mostly presented in temporal sequence, the author did not intend to reconstruct the whole winding and thorny life path of Miloš Crnjanski. At the end of the book, he offered to those who put facts ahead of the interpretation, on about 20 pages of chronology, a hint of such a reading experience, but, overall, he stayed away from classical biographism. Some facts, such as the famous duel with the pilot Sondermeier, could not be avoided, but the emphasis is not on the fateful events, adventures, anecdotes and other external biographical elements. Instead of a seasoned epic narrative, Lompar writes the drama of the writer’s inner biography, tending to mark the dominant spiritual and existential core of the author’s personality. For that purpose, he relied on a variety

¹ *On Tragic Poet*, Albatros plus, Belgrade 2010; *His poetry*, SLA, Belgrade 2010 (the second, expanded edition 2017)

of material: he analyzed the writer's correspondence in detail, both known and unknown, his political articles and the reactions of others to those articles, as well as certain works of his oeuvre. Written in dispersed parallels, including the implications present in the world literature, with the representative awareness of social and ideological trends, this study seeks to bring together the contents of social, cultural, literary and existential hermeneutics into an interpretive focus.

Lompar's monograph on Crnjanski is composed of 26 chapters, varying in length, in topics, sometimes even in style that goes from literary-scientific, philosophical, to literary-artistic. Separately, some of these chapters, such as the introductory or the final one, are masterpieces of the contemporary Serbian essay writing, so the book could also be read as a collection of essays in whose thematic core there is one man, but always in relation to others, mostly the opponents. Hence, its alternative title could be *Crnjanski as a Polemicist* or, in the spirit of our time, "interactive Crnjanski".

Three famous polemics were in the limelight, which were led in the late 1920s and in the first half of the 1930s, the years that Lompar calls the *turning years* of the author's life, showing at that time the "epochal vectors of world-historical movement" which crystallized the predetermined position of Crnjanski in our culture as well as in the international context forever. Which polemics is he talking about? The first one was led in 1929 with the literary committee of the Serbian Literary Association, beginning with the critic Marko Car, who, as a reviewer, refused to recommend the manuscript *Love in Tuscany* for printing. This dispute revealed the groundlessness of Crnjanski in the world of civic intelligence he pursued in his youth because he was considered subversive for that world in an unacceptable way – not as a leftist, a revolutionary, a communist, but as someone who disrupts their order internally. This status, on the other hand, was unappreciative by the radical modernists, with whom he shared poetic but not political opinions. "His position remains *heretical*," Lompar writes: "for the traditionalists, even the traditional modernists, he was too radical; for the surrealists, he was insufficiently radical" (p. 91).²

And having already experienced what it means to be left alone in the public arena in the dispute with SLA, he will feel it even more painfully in the thirties, when he confronts left-oriented writers on two occasions. Firstly, in March 1932, having a dispute with Nolit's authors, on whose behalf the critic Milan Bogdanović spoke out. The dispute took place in the field of cultural politics and lasted only for ten days, but its fierceness, echoes and far-reaching significance were inversely proportional to the length of its

² All quotations will be given with pagination in parentheses, according to the second, paperback, slightly expanded edition of the book, which came out a few weeks after the first one.

duration. As an epilogue came the appeal of a group of the intellectuals against Crnjanski's ideas on the endangerment of the books written in Serbian by the abundance of the translations of the mediocre foreign literature. Next to the leftists – Jovan Popović, Marko Ristić, Velibor Gligorić, Pierre Križanić – among the signatories there were the writers of civic and even right orientation: Niko Bartulović, Grigorije Božović, Milan Kašanin, Desanka Maksimović, Veljko Petrović, and Svetislav Stefanović. Not only did Crnjanski remain completely alone, but what turned out to be even more important was the fact: “there is a hidden alliance of civic and leftist intelligence” (124). With that, according to Lompar, the writer “touched the *social taboo* because he stripped the deep alliance on which the world of culture exists”, an alliance that “continued – in different ideological systems – to exist at various stages of historical movement” (125).

This even tougher defeat, however, did not completely discourage Crnjanski or quench his polemical fervor. He led the third significant dispute with Miroslav Krleža in the spring of 1934, on the basis of his text *The Defamed War*, which he did not write in the form of the apology of war as such, as many interpreted it, but for the sake of glorifying defensive heroism – primarily Serbian in the Great War. His goal was to defend that war against the relativizations that came from the camps which, both in the world and in our country, hid their political propaganda behind pacifism in those years. And although he was the most convincing in this dispute by then, it brought him an outsider's identification instead of satisfaction. In fact, Crnjanski realized that his conflict with the “correlative actions of civic and left-oriented intelligence” was not only internal, but that the cultural political forces with which he clashed “had international support” (190). That is how he found himself in the windmill of the dominant world-historical activities in the 20th century and will remain there permanently, including the years of exile.

The extensive review of these polemics, which Milo Lompar deliberately placed at the center of his study, reveals us the *political being of Miloš Crnjanski*, which could also be the title of the book. What are his political views? That issue is still a matter of controversy, and probably the majority of modern readers might be interested in it. The author shows that the writer's youthful political articles were neither leftwing nor rightwing oriented: “if we say that he was a nationalist, then we should say – Yugoslavian” (204). But as the basis of such nationalism could not be a non-existent nation, he found it in the state. “The state idea may have been his guiding thought, quite totalized in its content, which was carried over to the ideology of unitary Yugoslavism – he was almost ready to succumb to something what Cassirer called the state myth,” (204), Lompar claims, adding that this feeling was accompanied by an increased sensitivity to the attempts of the relativization of the statehood idea. “A great part of Marxism that seduces the youth is just a mask of various separatists,” Crnjanski wrote, noting lucidly one more fact: that behind the

Marxist anti-state rhetoric was hidden the “Habsburg constant” – “the great, venomous spider of an infamous, pre-war Vienna” (206).

Yugoslav etatism was the writer’s ideology until the mid-1930s, when his sobering started. Then he realized that the idea of Yugoslavia was unsustainable, because, along with its strengthening with Serbs, things developed in the opposite direction – with the Croats and Slovenes – towards emphasizing the national characteristics. “After fifteen years of bitter self-deception,” he, too, returns to the Serbian point of view. But “when he spoke of the Serbian cultural and historical existence, Crnjanski touched the taboo” (216), once again, in the short interval of time, and with even more serious consequences. Both right and left attacks followed, and the *Ideas* of June 15th, 1935, were banned. However, it will only take two years for our civic intellectual elite to see the truth of his views. But even if the attitudes were accepted, the man was not. That Crnjanski remained a *persona non grata* in civic Belgrade is obvious from the polite but cool tone with which Slobodan Jovanović responds to his interest in joining the newly established Serbian Cultural Club. “Even when his opinion on the Serbian viewpoint is adopted, when it is proved right, *he* remains unwelcome because he remains a *foreigner*” (219), Lompar shows, concluding that, in the final consequence, “Crnjanski could not fully identify with none of the available political orientations” (240).³ What idea of social order might then be closest to him, the author wonders, suggesting: “It would be a modern version of enlightened absolutism” (242). Unfortunately, such a system was no longer possible.

Crnjanski’s political polemics are the revealing ones in multiple ways. In addition to revealing its collision with the forces of the epoch, they “show his nature, both human and artistic, and they act as a predetermined signal of what is yet to come in the end” (200). Because the reputation of a nationalist, right-winger and a fascist sympathizer, which was given to him by the leftists in Yugoslavia before the war, it will catch up with him in Britain. Despite all the qualifications he possessed, there was no decent job for him in London, while Marko Ristić declared him a “dead poet” in his homeland. “In the darkest decade of his life, between 1945 and 1956, he found himself surrounded by all sides” (282), barely surviving with his wife in extreme scarcity, denounced, after a certain article was published, even by the Serbian emigration. He was quite familiar with the idea of suicide even earlier, but the mechanism of creative sublimation was salvageable and in his case – instead

³ “As a supporter of a strong state and anti-democratic orientation, he could have been close to Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, but as a Slavophile (Russophile) he could not be identified with them unconditionally. As a Slavophile, an anti-Democrat, and a supporter of a strong state, he could be close to the Soviet Union, but as an outspoken anti-communist, this is exactly what he could not be. As an anti-communist, however, he could have been inclined towards Western democracies, but as an anti-democrat he certainly could not be close to them either” (240).

of him, his hero Rjepnin would kill himself, as instead of Goethe Werther killed himself.

The bottom view, from which he observed the world at that moment, was, for Crnjanski, a new form of existential experience, certainly uncomfortable, but useful in searching for the new paths in the novel. It was also helpful in writing for Stojadinović's magazine *El Economista*, which was published in Argentina. He started to realize the economic principles in the background of the historical events, to understand the historical processes better than he used to understand them. Lompar shows that Crnjanski "his critique of money ideology – so narratively and symbolically diversified in the *Novel about London* – was based on his critique of the Western democracy" (238). Certain publicistic insights, such as the one showing that Americanization also affected the way of celebrating Christmas in England, so that instead of celebrating Jesus Christ they started celebrating Santa Claus for Christmas, which farsightedly imply the latter globalization phenomena.

The sense for the historical processes, however, was not accompanied by the feeling for the historical moment with Crnjanski, so that anachronism is one of the main characteristics of his social being. In that sense, the author shrewdly perceives him in the context of the two great contemporaries: "Despite his constant aspiration, he was not able to hit *the spirit of the moment*, which was so easy for so many opportunists, while Andrić was unsurpassed and masterful in that. [...] whereas Crnjanski – history took care of that – bet on *nothing*, which he received, Krleža bet on *something*, so that the communist regime – as the achievement of the revolution – singled him out with *something*. Only Andrić bet on *everything* – civic union with communism, the synthesis of contradictory epochal movements, almost endless opportunism – so he got *everything*" (417).

Although he did not appear in the polemics with Crnjanski nor did he sign the appeal against him, Andrić was both here and in many other places in the book, portrayed as his exact opposite. Although they were practically peers and entered the literary scene at the same time, and according to their talent were approximately equal to each other, their social success was in huge disproportion to Andrić's benefit, from the interwar period. Why was that? That is the question that Lompar deals with in several chapters and from different angles, so the relationship between the two writers – whether intentionally or not – turns into the leitmotif of his study. Therefore, the title could also be *Andrić and Crnjanski as Antipodes*, which would recall Nikola Milosević, another author's dear outsider of our literature. Systematically conducting comparison by contrast, Lompar insists primarily on the criterion of acceptance in culture, though his observations on purely literary oppositions are precious, especially in the chapter "The Loner", one of the best in the book. There, among other things, is analyzed the different attitude towards

the language of Andrić and Crnjanski – one “traditional” and one “radical” modernist.⁴

Describing the disproportion of their social success, Lompar finds analogies in the famous antipodes of world literature – Goethe and Schiller, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, Eliot and Pound – to reach the following conclusion: “Ivo Andrić is an inevitable figure on a long, long list of winners, like Man, while Miloš Crnjanski is also an inevitable figure on the long and marvelous list of losers as Joyce” (428). The description of the way Andrić won his Olympic position is not flattering for him at all, and the abundance of arguments that shadow his moral character gradually singles him out as negative hero of the book. However, this would assume that Crnjanski is its absolute positive hero, which, however, is not the case – the image is not black and white. What is Lompar’s Crnjanski after all?

We might say, first of all, a man of flesh and blood, brilliantly gifted and creative, firm, uncompromising and consistent, but with many human weaknesses: proud, fame-thirsty, narcissistic, choleric. Through the analysis of correspondence and articles, especially from a young age, very convincingly, at times touching, his need to be recognized and loved is obvious, primarily among his colleagues. Letters to Marko Ristić and Andrić are almost cries for closeness, and the flattering praises to Krleža in his memories of Zagreb in 1929, despite Krleža’s tartness that preceded them, Lompar interprets as “the hidden presence of one call for generational and poetic solidarity” (185). That was all in vain. It ended with tempestuous break-ups with Ristić and Krleža, with Andrić who was always distant, with slowly drifting apart. And so, within his own culture, Miloš Crnjanski, a plebeian by social instinct and an aristocrat by spirit, always remained a foreigner. “Once in exile – always in exile: in spite of the protests or the applauses of the audience. It was an authentic feeling: a foreigner, Crnjanski” (473). The consolation before eternity may be that in Milo Lompar he found a devotee who was able to recognize this tragic position and to articulate it. The book *Crnjanski – The Biography of a Feeling* is not apologetic, but it is a “book of deep devotion”. It is a book of love for the writer, not of an infatuation with him.

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Translated from Serbian by
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⁴ “Crnjanski and Andrić have multiple different understandings of language: both as *linguistic* (comma), and as *stylistic* (clarity), and as *poetic* (modernism), and as *cultural* (Vuk), and as *social* (civic world). For, Andrić represents the *norm*, Crnjanski its *subversion*” (425).

THE TESTAMENTARITY OF THEORETICAL PROSE

Slobodan Vladušić, *Literature and Comments*, Official Gazette, Belgrade 2017

Designed as a follow-up to the book *Crnjanski, Megalopolis*, Vladušić's recent work *Literature and Comments*, with its title, evokes Miloš Crnjanski's iconic book *Ithaca and Comments*, thus encouraging the hermeneutic zeal of the reader ready to get to the bottom of the potential analogies that such allusiveness initiates. Just as Crnjanski felt that the poetic works of *Lyrics of Ithaca* were not enough, and that they needed to be joined by comments, that organic extension of life to literature, which is not solely factual, not a reflection on life experiences, or self-referential, but is all that together, so did Vladušić in his commentary on the texts that thematize different phenomena of the modern world, his own life experiences, aspects of particular literary works or certain literary-theoretical settings, which testify to the expansion of the field of literature, the interweaving of its essence and techniques in human lives due to which they become more forceful, more meaningful and more honourable: "That is why a book on literature is, like this one, necessarily a book about life, about how one can live, how one can enjoy life, how one can fight for that life during the life."

Talking in Chapter One – "The State of Megalopolis" – about participating in the regular annual conference of the American Institute for the Advancement of Slavic Studies in Salt Lake City, working in TV services and spending three-month as a local television editor as if talking about the events of personal life that, thanks to the courage of taking a hermeneutic attitude, and the very application of hermeneutic skills, so they outgrew the status of experience by becoming pregnant experiences immanent to the figure of personality, Vladušić detects their true, factual meanings. They apostrophize "three variants of the same sickness", three manifestations of the same phenomenon – the phenomenon of the Megalopolis, which functions as a "meta-discourse which is poured out, like a river delta, in a series of backwaters. It appears in the macrosphere: it is the sphere of international relations, geopolitics and domestic politics ... It also appears in the microsphere, where its footprint is evident in the education techniques of the slaves of the Megalopolis." In his experience of participating the conference and doing the editorial work on local television, Vladušić notices the striking imbalance between the notion of a scientist / journalist figure as a defendant / heritor of the truth and austere reality that reveals their role of mere bureaucrats within academic / media structures. The experience of working in a TV service has resulted in the realization of an absolute economy, economic totalitarianism oriented solely to profit and money, which, in the spirit of Simmel's thinking, becomes a great leveler of all values. It is precisely in the pronounced gravitation of the Megalopolis towards money that Vladušić detects as one of the reasons for

the contemporary suppression of Christianity, which, in the essentiality of its teaching and its concerted action, is not governed by quantitative transactions and therefore limits the power of market. The Megalopolis equally, having in mind its inherent ideological, rhetorical, and manipulative strategies, erodes Christianity on two levels: the emergent plane (when, through the products of the cultural industry, it portrays believers as intolerant personalities inclined to feudalism) and the depth plane (the production of “scientific knowledge” that absolutizes the guilt of Christians). One more way in which educational programme of the Megalopolis penetrates human relations is related to the transformation of *workers*, who being unionized felt their class power and were constantly on the verge of a revolutionary movement, into utterly disunionized and depoliticized *consumers*, *the characters turned towards the others*, as defined by David Risman, whose set of values is constantly adjusting and changing depending on the set of values of the contemporaries. These are the slaves of the Megalopolis who are unable to create experience from the perception, then to put it into their life story, so such a void is necessarily filled with scenes of spectacle, by various products of the Megalopolis. Their desires, therefore, are concentrated on the goods, belonging to the current trends, and a sense of personal power which they satisfy by buying brands of multinational companies. Vladušić analyzes two frequent phenomena of the modern world in the equally eclectic way – the self-help industry and reality show programmes – demystifying the rhetoric and intentions of these Megalopolis messengers who not only shape the consciousness of their slaves (using stereotyped phrase, for example, in order to be successful in any field it is enough to believe in our dreams or in the moment of a happy set of circumstances) but they also affirm the obedience to the external authority, renunciation of freedom, and betrayal of one’s fellow human.

Encouraged by Toynbee’s reflections on the emergence and duration of the civilizations, his idea on the unique encounter that fundamentally changes earlier life by causing imbalance, Vladušić shapes one of the several thoughts-shelters of his book; the thesis that the meeting between a man and the Megalopolis, which is just going on, is also a unique encounter that throws a man’s life out of the equilibrium tray. The author, however, not only determines the qualitative and temporal dimension of this encounter, but also forms, in that chapter of the book, and especially in the latter parts, in a compact and consistent manner, the answer to the question how to understand the nature and models of action of the Megalopolis and what are the ways to resist it. As a key term, in this sense, is the determinant of *personality*, in which the collective and the individual touch, which in the public field is exposed in various ways, possessing world experience and power to generate experiences from the perceptions, and then experience into life story, i.e. creating one’s symbolic property. The personality denies the ascetic isolation that implies not knowing the language of the Megalopolis, and goes deep into

the knowledge and consideration of its theoretical narratives, whereas literature is associated with life realizing that literature itself is the discipline that provides skills for understanding of the world, for the process of autocreation, and community building. The Megalopolis, through the urban discourse consisting of theoretical decrees (esoteric image of the world) and virtualization of reality (exoteric image of the world), seeks to eliminate a person whose symbolic property exists beyond any possibility of counting characteristic to economic totalitarianism by marginalizing and / or stigmatizing it.

The relevant meaningful byway of the chapter is about shedding light on the relationship between Polis and Megalopolis, whose crucial distinctive feature is reflected in the state of consciousness and the propagated values. Categories intertwined with the concept of Polis – the idea of collective identity, knowledge, profit that improves the life of the whole Polis, human dignity and critical consciousness that allows the ironic attitude towards the products of the cultural industry – are completely unfamiliar to the Megalopolis, in whose space filled with the particles of deindividualized and dehumanized biomass, profit of the economic individuals serve solely to establish the oligarchy. In addition to the valuable insights from the comparative analysis of Hannah Arendt's text "Freedom and Politics" and Foucault's book *Words and Things*, so the closeness of Hannah Arendt with the categories of Polis is established, i.e. Fuko's writing with the views of the Megalopolis, Vladušić, evoking Borislav Pekić, points to the artificial dilemma between nation and democracy, which is extremely important in formulating the concept of the new Polis – just as democracy and nation do not exclude each other, so the protection of the values that the tradition and national identity consist of and their further modernization do not confront.

Within the first chapter, the author also draws attention, on the one hand, to the phenomenon of playful writing, which becomes aware of the metaphoricality of language, so it establishes the states of meaning that Roland Barthes calls the *vibrations of meaning*; in that sense, Michel Foucault also emphasizes the porosity of the book's boundaries, its reference to the other texts, demanding freedom of writing, which implies the freedom to move the writing outside the body, which is the hypostasis of the desire for eternal youth and casualness of the play. Testamentary writing, on the other hand, which takes effect at the moment of facing death and apostrophizes the strong connection between body and writing, is realized in the *Book of Job*, in which "the consciousness of death penetrates as the pre-writing of Job's body." This type of writing gives a particular person a special inheritance – the status of the subject, in which it is not done only in accordance with the law on blood, since testamentary writing is equally addressed to all *close people*. In addition to defining the testament, the author describes vertical and horizontal discontinuities in the inheritance and two different types of assets (material and symbolic legacy),

he also reconsiders the insights regarding playful and testamentary writing, which he no longer perceives as opposing, but in the latter he finds the metaphor on whose foundations the new concept of the fight against Megalopolis is to be built.

In the second chapter, entitled “Experience”, next to the travelogue segment on Malta, the search for the *soul of the city*, its invisible part which, when we reach out to it by ourselves or intensely think about it, becomes a personal experience, the author in “The Comment of Malta” provides a definition of the term of life story and gives the list of life techniques that enable the creation of experiences (rhetorical processing of the experience, hermeneutical upgrading of the experience and intertextual contextualization of the experience). The lines of this chapter in which the author of the book evokes Benjamin’s putting into question the possibility of storytelling about the First World War is permeated by a moderate polemical tone – for in our literature Crnjanski, Vinaver, Krakow, R. Petrović wrote about the war, ie. De Chardin, Jinger, Remarque, Hemingway within the world literature – but also emphasizing the importance of recognizing not only the biological but also the philosophical aspect of war, which is based on the transformation of the perception of war into the experience of war.

The chapter “Personalities”, based on the dialogic relationship between the texts devoted to prominent Serbian writers, as well as the dialogic relationship with “Comments of Personalities”, which emphasizes the power of personality radiation and its power to reconcile personally and collectively, is opened by two essays dedicated to Miloš Crnjanski. The text “What do we need Crnjanski for?” firstly problematize the issue of state reason, which, in Foucault’s interpretation, being far from its basic meaning, suggests the notion of interest, manipulative authority, and threat to the condition of the completeness against the neoliberal system and its philistine advocates. Although *The Second Book of Migrations* and *Novel about London* indicate that the transition from military collectivity into the modern biomass cannot be prevented, Vladušić still recognizes in *Lament over Belgrade* a new type of collectivity based not on a belief in the military past but on the belief in the common future. The work “Crnjanski and Father’s Death”, however, illuminates the death of the writer’s father as an example of an indifferent death, greeted without fear and with awareness of a fulfilled destiny; such a death, full of heroic ethos, then determined the death of Crnjanski himself. The next two texts thematize the act of storytelling in Andrić’s works – “Mustafa Madžar and the Crisis of Storytelling” opens the question of crisis of storytelling, because the hero is being anchored into the silence by not being able the shocks of the war to turn into memory and thus make them completed, as well as the question of reception crisis, since the story cannot be imprinted into the listeners’ experience. “The Novel and the Death of Storytelling” in the focus of the author’s hermeneutic attention put Andrić’s implicit critique

of the novel in *The Damned Yard* by the poetics of Friar Peter's oral storytelling, characterized by nonlinearity and the idea of the infinite story, while modernist prose, unable to perceive the world in the narrative form and preserve the subject from the process of disintegration, proclaims the death of the story and the narrator. The text devoted to the metaphor of the wings in Stanislaw Krakow's novel with the same title emphasizes the author's intention to see through the way of forming a novelistic picture of the war (deheroisation and philosophical layers of meaning), but also to point out that it is more important than the definite establishment of more dominant concept of aviation (bombing or hunting) to show "sensitivity to the paradox of war experience." Searching for the reasons why Vinaver formed the theme of the Great War in his collection *War Companions* with restrained poetic figurativeness is the backbone of the text "Vinaver's Discreet Heroes": simplicity and intelligibility are understood as the echo of the war, but also as a signal of the eminence achieved in the heroic modesty, dedication to the goal and persistence of Vinaver's figures of war companions.

The fourth chapter – "Megalopolis and Literature" – is based on a quartet of texts, most of which are dedicated to reflecting on nominally different but essentially identical theoretical concepts, which, in the name of ideological and political reading, abolish aesthetic relevance, the possibility of aesthetic criterion. The first text in this chapter activates the issue of the crisis of literary-critical thought as a symptom of the crisis of author's individuality, defining representative literature as writing that does not aspire to novelty, but emphasizing precisely representativeness, that is, what is owed to the discourse and what works as its integral part. Such interpretations are exemplified in cultural studies, which become a topic of the separate text, going into the direction of demystification of particular theoretical narratives created within the framework of these studies, based on the rhetoric of radical exclusivity, negative identification, ideological reading and the dishonest concealing of unlike-minded people; thus, cultural studies, as well as new historicism, make it impossible to see the whole world / the Megalopolis and take an ironic attitude to its strategies. Postcolonial critique, a twist which occurred in the way of thinking of Edward Said which emerged with opening the issue of hybrid identity in the book *Culture and Imperialism*, as well as the repercussions of postcolonial criticism onto Serbian literature, are the thematic backbone of the text "Postcolonial Criticism and Serbian Literature". Outlining the history of the crime genre through the hermeneutical illumination of its representative spokesmen (Poe's crime story, works by A. C. Doyle and A. Christie, American "hard-boiled" crime novels and the treachery of its character and critical spirit in the crime novels of Norwegian writer Jo Nesbø) the crucial is, but, the intention of the text "Crime-novel at the beginning of the 21st century".

In the paper "The Future of Romanticism," in the final chapter of "The New Polis," Vladušić seeks to look at the romantic models of preserving

human dignity – linking the subject to the categories of the Absolute and national history, without denying his own subjectivity – but also emphasizing the fact that urban discourse attacks various bastions of romantic discourse, such as the one about the possibility of national identity. Next to defining the sovereign and democratic component of the political orientation of the personality, the “New Polis Commentary” points out that political and ethical resistance to the depolitisation characteristic for Megalopolis is already being prepared in those acts that seemingly belong to the private sphere (creating experience from sensation, insisting on life techniques, testamentary opinion and symbolic property), and then further manifest themselves in connecting personalities on multiple levels (merging personalities into the “Polis” group, and interconnecting those groups and penetrating into the spheres of the institutions where they “open up funding resources for further personal war actions”).

Although the form of the presentation relies on making distance of the writer’s instance from the matter the attention is being paid to, the writer of these lines would here, quite justifiably and in the spirit of the idea of the inseparability of literature and life, recall the fourth year of studying of Serbian literature and the valuable experience of attending lectures of the author of the book *Literature and Commentary*. The interpretations of prose and poetry in the twentieth-century of Serbian literature – which inevitably included hermeneutical references to the creations of the world literature and the experience of life itself – were imbued with so much awareness of the necessity of narrating / discussing symbolic property that was bequeathed to us in national and civilizational terms (which both educates and obliges us), said with so much spiritual radiance, truthfulness, and passion that it seemed as if every word had a decisive weight, and as if each was uttered in the last breath. That aura of testamentality, which wraps Vladušić’s lectures, radiates from the pages of his theoretical prose, whose relevance in the academic arena, but also much more broadly, is testified by the writer’s impeccable erudition, discernment and audacity of the hermeneutic attitude, coherence and programming consistency in writing, ease and harmony of linguistic form, and finally, the very act of transmitting one’s symbolic property through the testamentary writing addressed to the close ones to encourage the exchange of experiences, but also to those who are distant, but whom the writer of this book, thanks to the public expression of his own image of the world, despite all the cunning strategies of the Megalopolis, still makes close.

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WHERE TO GO FROM LONELINESS?

Đorđo Sladoje, *Descent into Loneliness*, "Filip Višnjić", Belgrade 2015

From his literary beginnings, Đorđo Sladoje has had steady basic poetic manuscript and an experience of the world. As Mihajlo Pantić correctly noticed, in a kind of limited sense, Sladoje is "a non-evolutionary poet who creates, by logic, variations of relatively reduced, basic lyrical themes."¹ However, in the processing of these very personal, but at the same time often historical topics, Sladoje, as Ranko Popović pointed out is, "tinglingly sensitive to the signs of time and tradition alike."² But times are changing, as well as the meaning of the traditions in them, and these changes have been deeper and more acute in global political and technological terms, as well as in everyday life, during the twentieth and early twenty-first century than in the previous few centuries. That is where the considerable diversity of the artistic worlds in Sladoje's steady poetic manuscript comes from.

Born in 1954 in Klinja near Ulog, in Upper Herzegovina, Sladoje finished grammar school in Sečanj and studied sociology in Sarajevo, where he had lived until his arrival in Vrbas and Novi Sad. In such diverse settings, he sought the essential features of his time in the light of memories of early childhood and youth. And memories, of course, are changing by themselves depending on the circumstances in which they are recalled, as the urban ambience of the urban areas in which Sladoje spent his mature years drastically changed before and after the civil wars in our region. As a sign of these changes in invoking memories Sladoje's latest collection is new, although distinctive poetic echo of his earlier poetic achievements.

The encounter of rural and urban culture emerges in this echo, in the pronounced metaphorization of poetic speech, as well as in the harsh religious confrontation with the contemporary world. This is already evident in the introductory prayer poem "Epiphany," in which our modern novice is trying to listen to the voice of God, waiting "to hear / The one he has forgotten."³ But:

*The wind sends its
Quiet hallelujahs through
To the lonely fir tree
Dreaming your grief too (10).*

¹ See: Ranko Popović, "The Redeeming Grace of the Poem," *Matica Srpska Yearbook*, Vol. 472, Vol. 5, November 2003, 782.

² Ranko Popović, *Завјечно памћење њјесме*, Завод за уџбенике и наставна средства, Источно Сарајево 2007, 368. *Votive Remembrance of the Poem*, Institute for Textbooks and Teaching Aids, East Sarajevo 2007, 368.

³ "Epiphany", *Descent into Loneliness*, 9. Further quotations of verses from this collection include page numbers in parentheses.

It is as if there is just a conifer plant, “hemlock”, spruce left, that can hear otherworldly call in our IT world – leaving the question open of how long it will still be able to discern it, since even the “wind” is just “sending quiet hallelujahs” to us. Whether perhaps the voice in the glory of God becomes a hint of the spiritual and emotional end of the world?

Many other poems in this collection are calling to the world beyond this world through this or that plant, this or that beast, or inconsolable childhood sorrows. In the poem “Bowing” father invites his son to bend down, to do his own homage, so that he can set his foot into the “temple of the demolished home” and kiss:

*Lopsided cross
In the distant cemetery
And little church at the fingertips (39).*

So, to be able to see the collapsing of his world, which, otherwise, only plants can see:

*Mystery of elderberry
Praying whisper of grass blades
In the midst of thunder hear (40).*

In the “Shepherd’s fantasy” one of our contemporary unfortunates recognizes everything that has been “irrevocably tumbled”:

*Into the abysses of childhood,
Into the whirl of oblivion (41).*

At the same time, he wonders how he could “raise up his father’s house”, “weed the cemetery” and “straighten the crosses” (41)? Perhaps by resurrection of his primordial experience of wildlife, for that is how the “nests in the orchard”:

*With chirping hum
Will be sanctified (41).*

But that rural prayer in the urban world is being rounded ticklishly:

*And is the flock
Ever asked
If the shepherd
is to their liking (42).*

And in the poem “Our Rebellions”, Sladoje suspiciously invokes his memories as possible signposts in a spiritually meaningless, rationally and

informatically “settled” present in which “we do not even live” – but “we are sorry” to “die” (65). In a similar way, the contemporary world is evoked in the poem “Presentation of Jesus at the Temple” both in personal and otherworldly cosmic-coloured ironic enlightenment:

*This is the day by which to measure
The sun’s grace by the beast’s shadow (11).*

Addressing us so *sub specie aeternitas*, Sladoje refers to the cruel schisms and terrorist attacks of global proportions, which have lately been fumbling across African and Asian territories. Hence, there are centuries of all kinds of human staggering together – as well as the urge to escape from them

*In vain looks for among us
Mother of God since olden times
At least one like her own son (11).*

In other words, *Descent into Solitude* evokes miracles in the spiritually and emotionally emptied world.

This invocation sometimes reflects on our diverse experiences of animals. Of course, in everyday language one can be angry as a lynx, faithful as a dog, cunning as a fox; one can make a mountain out of a molehill. In the analogous suggestive afterthoughts, the animal world twinkles as well as in the verses of Sladoje’s poem “Our Animals”. There is, at the very beginning, an image of the modern urban world in which the coldness “radiates from everything” and in which, as he tells his mother, the poet may be mostly missing “our animals” (34). And this is the omen that foresees lost unity:

*Warmth of sheep flock
Crammed in the woods
Under one fleece
Round one bell
As in that cave
Where newborn God sleeps(43).*

This cry for union resonates strongly in the context of contemporary political, national and religious schisms, divisions, bombing and bomber terrorism, as well as unprecedented scale of refugees. And in a similar spirit, the muffled tone of longing for tolerance embodied in the “cow’s eyes” echoes:

*Which forgive swearings
Insults and blows
And as if they say
Sonny, just you
Do your job (34).*

The last two verses were said by old Vukašin from Klepci a long time ago, while an Ustasha in Jasenovac cut him piece by piece. Later, that very same Ustasha as a patient of a neuropsychiatrist Dr. Neda Zec, confessed that the words of his victim had made him mad, and Dr. Zec recorded it and published it. From that point on, the poem goes into “glee /of lambs and kids” and the essential “foal joy”:

*Which for a higher sense doesn't care
Neither seeks for reasons (34).*

Are we more envious of that gentleness of “cow’s eyes / Which forgive swearings / Insults and blows” today, or of a poet who, despite all the premonitions of spiritual and emotional frustrations in the modern world, has found the strength to see those cow’s eyes in that way? In short, these poems ask a question where to go from loneliness – into skepticism, into religion, into childhood, or to choose companionship with wildlife, but this sharply posed question remains ultimately open.

Svetozar KOLJEVIĆ

Translated from Serbian by
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SALVATION THROUGH THE POEM

Đorđo Sladoje, *Singer in the Fog*, Orthodox Word, Novi Sad 2017

Đorđo Sladoje is somehow marked correctly as the “most persistent” poet of the *Stražilovo line* in contemporary Serbian poetry. Especially if we leave aside all the changes that the significant poetic current is experiencing in its seventeen decade-long duration, as well as the fact that at the current moment of Serbian poetry it becomes thinner and thinner. Because if originally under the label of *Stražilovo* orientation we understood, the matrix of Branko’s native, national and intimate writing which relied on the clarity and concreteness of speaking the national language, the liveliness, beauty, emotionality and expressiveness of folk poetic achievements, with the intention of full identification with them, then the biggest changes of *Stražilovo* model happened during the twentieth century: firstly by the radicalization of its intimist factor, with Crnjanski, that is, with Raičković, and then with cultural-historical and spiritual projection of his national component accomplished,

for example, in Desanka Maksimović's later books and the orientation of Slobodan Rakitić following the trace of the Karelian vertical, drawn by the famous Miodrag Pavlović's *Anthology*.

Somewhere along these poetic coordinates of the intimate *Stražilovo line* and Pavlović's Karelian vertical we find, and for decades we have been following, Đorđo Sladoje. Communicative no less than Branko Radicević himself, Sladoje with each new collection of poems authenticates, and sporadically even surpasses, the aesthetic range of his previous collections, expanding some of the topics being used, rounding up the others or opening the new ones, with continuous semantic turns, emotional beats and rhythmic and morphological transformations. *The Singer in the Fog* also testifies to it, the latest of fifteen of Sladoje's collections of poems, composed of five lyrical circles and the final, contentually cumulative and meaningfully obscure poem.

In the first lyrical circle, "The Year and Its Children," Sladoje turns to a complex, it seems to me, for him, new or at least atypical topic, facing the metaphysical problem of time and being, lyrically suggestively apostrophizing and poetically sovereignly contemplating on the phenomenological abundance of natural changes and cultural and social rituals within an annual life cycle of twelve months. He wrote a poem on each month in the circle. Apart from being individually animated according to the main meteorological-vegetation characteristics and corresponding mythological and folklore motifs, the months in these poems are mostly personified as lyrical heroes of the poetized Orthodox calendar, sometimes as figures of a traumatic national-historical monument. If, on the one hand, according to Rilke's inspiration and skillful summing up of the topic of ripening, "The Mother of God's stanzas" should be especially emphasized, most of the other poems in this circle are remembered primarily for their unprecedented amazement when approaching the basic motif ("Like a tipsy gravedigger smiling/October is coming"), the peculiar melancholically humorous intonation and the dynamics of change of the speakers in them.

Focusing on the cycle "The Last Residence" on the homeland terrain of Upper and Old Herzegovina, partly onto the recently usurped areas of wider geographical area marked by the ancient spiritual and historical cultural features of Serbian national identity, Đorđo Sladoje writes moving, contentually heterogeneous lyrical reports, humorous ethno-psychological postcards and elegantly evocative illuminations, perpetuating two or three evocative lines of his decade-long writing. The first group of these works include "Prayer in front of the Wire", "The Last Residence Hašani" and "The Wreath for Trnovo", poems with the theme of recent war persecution of the Serbian population, the devastation and suppression of its cultural traces, together with the motive of the absurd cruelty of the civic – read : religious – bloodshed in the poet's homeland. The poems "Let Him Die" and "The Eternal Groom" can be added to the aforementioned titles, the accomplishments about another national

pestilence of our time – the demographic downfall or the “white plague”. To the second group of poems of the same circle belong those in which the cruelty of nature and the patriarchal highlander mentality being in contact with civilizational innovations, cause often humorous, sometimes grotesquely skewed image of this corner of Sladoje’s lyrical world. The evocative lyrical appeals of strong melancholy-elegiac intonation include, eventually, the poems “Awakening”, “The Last Courier” and “The Memorial for Parents”, while “The Fall of the Town of Ulog” and “Don’t Lower Your Gaze” are in fact the ode to contrasting exemplary fiasco and indifferent self-destruction, that is, an epistolary elegy over a devastated and estranged homeland. Hence, in the light of all the above-mentioned contents, the very title phrase of this poetic circle changes its stereotypical meaning and receives the sad, pietistic meaning of the last respect to everything here poetically invoked and brought to life.

The third circle, “The Shameful Vilayet”, is substantially intertwined with the fourth lyrical circle, which gives its title to Sladoje’s new collection. This overflow of frequent motifs or basic themes from one cycle to another, and from book to book, is more a rule than an exception for this poet, which can give the impression, to a reluctant or less careful reader, of the repetition. Regarding that, however, better and more evident reasons can be given about Sladoje’s persevering, in many variations, several key topics such as personal and social everyday life, the evocation of native and family motives, such as the lament over the recent national incidents and refugee tumult, but also of constant metapoetic self-examination. Both through one and the other of the two aforementioned poetic circles, one experiences the unfeelingness and indifference of today’s man, especially the contemporary domestic world, but somehow viewed more from a moralistic, ethical rather than social-psychological point of view: “No harm to anyone/ Done by you honey/ Not as a tinker’s cuss/Nor a wisp of smoke/ What a world this is/ And cabal among people” (“The Shameful Vilayet”), or : “And I’ve wondered around too / In the mist my soul strolled / Is there my share / In anythng but shame” (“Gurgle”). In another poem, again, Sladoje considers the genesis of our current anthropological and historical evil in a long prior practice of civilizational and ideological repression, in the excessive suppression of the individual’s natural, the vitalistic bestiality of an individual, and in the imposition of the historical consciousness of the collective, without which: “We would be less/ Bloody and scary/ Both we and our/ Souls/And bills” (“The Inner Beasts”) unless the irony is too bitter here. Yet, as probably the only ray of hope and light in all this “vale of tears” defeat, chaos, shame and embarrassment, in despair fallen “world and time”, there is, paradoxically, the motive of a singer sunk in the fog, who sings from *the heart of the earth, from its roots and veins*, seeing, actually, no way out of this universal eclipse, except in his own singing.

Through a number of impressive poetic appeals and lyrical evocations, the religious, metaphysical and metapoetically intoned final poetic cycle “The Eternal Companion” (“Mirror”, “Word”, “Something”, “Fire”, “Pencil”, “Bowl”) are interwoven into this interplay of values, and ontologically equated *word* and *soul*, as symbols of the divine origin and man’s redemption. And in the poetry of Đorđo Sladoje, it is known long ago, that their harmony is justification of the poetic mission. *The Singer in the Fog* verifies this sovereignly for the umpteenth time, of course, when it comes to the plane of the poem itself, its poetic inspiration and its lyrical form.

However, if we have in mind the reality, the order of the world and man’s position in it, the poet constantly sings about, things are almost diametrically opposed. *The word* understood as a divine plan, on the one hand and its actual embodiment, on the other, most often are in the apparent disarray, in disharmony, chaos, and all kinds of disorder, which the poet’s mind clearly perceives, the authority of the divine *word* / *logos*, and deeply felt by his *soul*. Hence, the critic noticed Sladoje’s poetic skepticism, often with strong critical tones, but not with despair and bare pessimism. Sladoje’s ubiquitous, though restrained, emotionality is at the service of his sobriety, elemental ethics, and somewhat patriarchal humanity, but it seems to me, no less, his hopes for the eschatological outlook of man’s existence and belief in gospel truths.

Finally, the question remains as to what future the aforementioned values and poetic characteristics of Sladoje’s poems and his poetry can have. The answer to that question depends both on the status of the poetry itself within the future cultural model of our social and national communities and on the status of the aforementioned Stražilovo line in that model. Somehow over-emphasized homeland feeling – in the mental, stylistic-linguistic and documentary form – will remain, I believe, as it is today, largely within its own framework. Other aspects of Sladoje’s writing can expect the destiny of most of today’s poetic currents and more powerful poetic voices, regardless of the degree and form of modernity that, as Predrag Protić reminds us, manifests itself in two ways. Speaking back in the 1970s about a then young poet with whom Sladoje shared only certain values, this critic emphasized as a guarantee his modern mentality, leaving aside his sensibility. Đorđo Sladoje, on the contrary, manifests a prominent patriarchal-traditional mentality, but cannot be denied, often, the accentuated modernity of poetic sensibility, on which, in addition to lively communicativeness, rests the brighter future of his poetic word.

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Translated from Serbian by
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“THE WORD – SEAL THE WORLD IS”

Alek Vukadinović, *Poetry Atelier*. 2, Gramatik, Belgrade 2017

Twelve years after the book of poems *The Poetic Atelier* was published (2005), the poet Alek Vukadinović presents, I suppose, the final part of the created diptych entitled *Poetic Atelier*. 2. The verses also witness to the further “span” of his characteristic linguistic melodiousness, topped with poetic gnomic notes, often in the realm of the imaginary, even the abstract. Also, this “span” is in accordance with the refined sense of linguistic and semantic harmony, but also depicted with the completeness of his poems, the way his poems are. The justification of Vukadinović’s literary manifesto can be found in Mallarmé’s predictions that the elements of music and sound should be restored to the poetry of meaning and image, because, as the poet himself says, poetry without music and melody is nothing but a bird without wings and voice, where we can recognize the dream of numerous poets, specially those who try to achieve poetry that can be experienced as pure poetry, which was particularly appreciated by one Paul Valéry. Otherwise, literary criticism has already recognized Vukadinović’s verse as a bonding parallel between Valéry’s and Mallarmé’s distinctive space and aesthetics, as the “sonic branch of Serbian symbolism,” as Ljubomir Simović rightly called it, but without renunciation of the authentic linguistics, and plunging into the secrets of language, the ancient melodies of the words, the preserved tradition and literary heritage, which in the final conclusion became the trademark of his poetry, which is another, symbiotic and equal part of his poetry.

In these situations, when a mature, hardworking and autonomous eighty-year-old poet decides to speak again, after a certain, not to say longer, specified time distance, curiosity is represented in the question related to the poet’s sustainable ability to preserve his former poetic value level. On this occasion, such questioning ceases and the concern disappears immediately after one reads the first cycle of “Zarna terzine”. There is no reason for fear. On the contrary.

In fact, at the very beginning of the book, we also notice the poet’s consistency to the enviable creative process so far, the poetic content, and the quality of the verse creating, as well as the poet’s further Nastasijević and Koder spell-like and explorative breakthrough into the words, into the pre-words, into the voice fractions of the archaic words and their meanings, which reflect the poet’s virtuosity. The image of the poet as the magical supremo of words gives the impression of hermetic poetics, and that is how Vukadinović’s poetry was interpreted by literary criticism. At the same time, to the semantic concealment, but also to the essence of the reduced words, the poet’s ideas and edification are being acceptable, but also linguistically and melodically

susceptible, with the feeling and the power of awakening memories, experiences and heritage as invaluable things that determine both the poem and the poet.

Linguistic reduction and tautology are not the end in itself, but a convenience that such embeddedness and rhythmic slowing down with a spell-like amplification for the purpose of further rethinking the situation, and offering the poet's plan to the reader, with a genuine and hidden desire for further comprehension of verses and poems, for according to Mallarmé's careful forethought both on the poems and the books in which he claims that they are just a possibility to be a poem and a book, which they will only become in the hands and subsequent experience of the reader.

Therefore, it must be said that Vukadinović's linguistic-meaningful bravados retain the privilege of a further and unpredictable semantic echo, as well as of reciprocal subsequent intersections and transmissions of meaning, whose flow cannot be predetermined and time-limited. The process of resourcefulness and comprehension is accelerated and enabled by the poet's recognized autoreflexivity, which became a key feature of Vukadinović's "later" verses, and which represent a special metaphysical quality and significance of poetry, as Bojana Stojanović Pantović noticed in her afterword of the *Poet's Atelier. 2*.

The poet's former characteristic, already mentioned, is exploring the magic of language, the magic of verse and sound, which the poet continues in the unexpected and unusual poem "Seal-self-quotes" (partly also in the previous poem "From ARS POETICA, III"), consisting of Vukadinović's meditative and linguistically playful miniatures from the earlier books, and which is (the poem "Seal-self-quote") now harmoniously embedded in the cycle "Words and seals". Other poems from this book have the same function of mutual multiplying conversations that overflow into other books, but they also takeover the dialogues initiated in the previous verse communities, including the first part of the diptych. The paths of these conversations cannot be assumed, but only personally experienced.

However, in this way, a poet Vukadinović not only called upon his earlier verses and sentences, but also tried, and achieved, a kind of connection and a dialogue between the *Poet's Atelier. 2* with his earlier books, and reminds the readers of his entire body of poetry that this dialogue, indeed, is still ongoing, primarily because of the closeness and compatibility of the emotional layers, and the "essence" and meaning of our duration. But also because of linguistic and syntactic innovations which, by pervading and networking throughout his books, still some of those word-symbols ("Mouth of Fear, Mouth of River Mouth, Hunter, Distance, Wings, Circle, Trace, Poreč, Roof, Gist, Divine-mount, Sparkle, Enchant-mount") have already become

recognizable and a trademark of certain books of poetry by Vukadinović, whose echoes from time to time suddenly appear during the reading of the *Poet's Atelier. 2*, which consists of only twenty-six poems, classified into eight cycles.

Starting with the first cycle Vukadinović already testifies that contrast is the ambience in which his poems happen even today. Moreover, in the same verse, the poet, just as he did before, juxtaposes the original word with its contradiction (“daytime-nighttime”; “time-illtime”, “image-anti-image”, “sounds-silences”, “straight-curving”, “unsaid-said”) thus creating a genuine string of images and meanings in lapidary discourse. At the beginning of the first Zarne Terzinas there are glimpses of eternity and signs of recognition through a time that is endless (“Traces to be recognized among all others: / Poems within poems, wings within wings”), and in the second segment of the same poem he mentions those who are not entitled to this (“He who has no breath, he who lacks voice/ Cannot dream nor merge with them”).

The presence of the Absolute is also significant in this book, as evidenced by the titles of the poems themselves – “The Ode to God of Opacity”, “Little Iconostasis”, “Everyday Prayer”, “Prayer Book”, as well as the final verse of the book: “Full is the circle of God is the new endlessness glittering.” In the same poem, “The New Span is Being Made,” the poet recalls that the words are symbols of duration, and even of daily survival: “To God you are everything, You are a live ray/In the language-sound the new span is being made.”

The poet continues to admonish and warn us of the inconveniences in the form of spell-like and fairytale-like darkness, wind, oblivion and lulls, which have always threatened us, this time, using poetic alliteration and assonance (“Dark are the ravines Mute are the strings/ ending the poem ending the Speech” in the poem “Dark are the Ravines Mute are the Strings”; “Now a loud wind shrieks / Down Mount Dark-Darkness peaks / Now a loud wind howls // Through your inmost bowels” – the poem “It Used to Be”).

And in the *Poet's Atelier. 2*, we notice certain poet's deviations from his procedure so far, for example in the poems with longer and calmer verses (“Deep Peaks Cantata “, “Sounds from the Spell-Mount”, “Footnote on the subject: poet and the Muse of Epiphany”), which do not accept sonic refractions. In terms of language, new words, unexpected and belonging to the non-poetic material, should be singled out, more precisely – syntagmas which are the changes of the already named: “Mouth from the footnotes mouth from the margins” in the poem “Poem on the Poem to Fugue”. Still, the condensed, rhythmic, abbreviated, and reduced word-sentences captivate the reader that are at the same time images, symbols, and associative arrays, and which lack nothing, such as in the poem “Small Iconostasis”, ruled by the sentences of only one, but meaningful and pictorially sufficient words, especially in the series (as in fairy tales) of the broken dodecasyllable in the distich:

House Forest Mountain
Sky Cross and Rose
Deep under the roof
The soul is being rooted

reminding us once again of the magical significance of the house, as the primordial microcosm and the root of all known, essential phenomena and the words, which the poet Alek Vukadinović has been advocating for more than half a century with his authentic verse, and still defining us in its full sense and meaning (“In the language-sound / The essence is the only gist” – from the poem “Praise to the Speech”). In an interview, the poet Vukadinović points out that the centre of his entire poetry (which criticism has long since called an enviable melodic-linguistic and meaningful harmony) – Letter, Book, Poetry and Art (the poet writes them in capital letters) because there are no more sublime motives for him.

In addition to the expected numerous and various tautological stylistic and playful figures, the refrain (in the form of entire verses, phrases, opposing binaries) is a significant characteristic of Alek Vukadinović’s latest poetry book, which once again presents the poet as a virtuoso of words, games of images and meanings, remaining dedicated to linguistic creation, lyrical abstractions and associations, as well as the effective gnomic points, thus confirming both that way with high aesthetic values, which is why he earned a place at the very top of Serbian poetry long ago.

And together with this community of verses *the Poetic Atelier. 2*, the poet Alek Vukadinović once again confirmed his enviable coordinates on the map of Serbian poetry.

Aleksandar B. Laković

Translated from Serbian by
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POWERFUL MOVEMENT OF WORDS

Dragan Jovanović Danilov, *Mind of the Raging River*, National Library “Stefan Prvovenčani”, Kraljevo, 2018

In the review on the previous collection of D. J. Danilov *Talking to Waterfalls* (2016) at the very same place, we noticed that it could be considered as another part of some kind of new poetic trilogy, started two years earlier

with the collection *Symmetry of the Whirlwind*. Having in mind that one of Danilov's compositional and thematic constants is precisely the periodic creation of the three books (let us recall the first collections from the 1990s, and then the books *The House of Bach's Music*, *Living Parchment* and *Europe under the Snow*, which made up the trilogy named after the first one, in 1997). *Mind of the Raging River* encircles the poetic thematization of the archetype of the great water, that is, the ocean, the sea, the river and all the existing phenomena and manifestations related to water and its complex symbolism, its life-giving and at the same time destructive function. One would certainly recognize in Danilov's reference to these natural phenomena the traces of the (neo)romantic spiritualization of nature, i.e. the materialization of the spirit, the universal chronotope in which, as in its demonic temple, the poet's heart also resides (again reminiscence onto the Romantics), which is by analogy close to the soul, that is, to the body with its own self (Hans Grelan). Therefore, Danilov's poetic idiom slightly cunningly counts with the echoes of authentic sensibility, as well as its ironic quality, relativization, and even negation. Sensibility, a powerful inner experience of longing for the integrity of the subject and life, most effectively and innovatively functions in this book when placed in relation to the self-reflective layer of the poet's testimony on the subject of his poetics. And that is a somewhat differently understood relationship between the poem and the reader, through a kind of archeology of poems and the psychology of poetry writing.

What connects this book, like the previous one, with the poetics of the *House of Bach's Music* and its associative waterfalls, the swirling of opposing sensory impressions, (self)observation and astonishing descriptions, changing speech registers and moods, which is largely based on the ludicrous position of the lyrical subject/hero, on his narcissism, duality, multiplication and simultaneous gradual withdrawal from the text. D. J. Danilov is one of those poets who never conceals his own self; on the contrary, he constantly points to his autobiographical and mystifying origins. And that has to do with auto-thematization, the intersecting of reflective (mental) and sensory images. This configuration of the lyrical subject makes it transparent for linguistic mediation and the amalgamation of that kind of energy that would remain completely hidden and unleashed without such intersections. That is exactly how poets write down their own poetic script in some of the traditional codes, while the figure of the poetic subject appears as an unstable and fluid Self, a kind of illumination that enlightens the text palimpsest internally, as a multiple "nomadic" or travelling subject, or it aspires to some kind of its reestablishment.

That narcissistic poetic "pose" Danilov took over from (neo) avant-gardists and by striving to implicate ecstatically the omnipresence of oneself in the world, and vice versa, is closest to Guillaume Apollinaire. He also sees himself as a figure existentially grounded in *poetic speech*, in contrast to and

despite silence and powerlessness, and this mutual dynamic lies at the origin of many of the author's poems. It is the speech / word, but also the audibility of the unspeakable that make it unrepeatable in historical and metaphysical terms, even when the very act of singing is strongly doubted. Hence, discursive, auto-poetic, and in fact prescriptive statements form part of this and such a heritage. All three cycles of the collection "Mysterious Telegrams", "The Torch for the Babylonian Daughters" and "The Raft" are characteristic, specific theses that intersect the fluid, elusive and pictorial fabric of the poem. One kind of statement seeks to persuade us of a particular attitude of the poet, while the other, which is most often tropical, takes the reader into confusion, paradox.

In the long introductory poem, "The Wave Escaped from the Ocean," which almost comes close to a kind of prose tractate (and such is a larger number of poems in this collection), the lyrical hero will confidently, without any doubt, say:

I have no respect for what
has already been written, so do not kowtow either
over my words because it restrains and petrifies.
Immobility is the same as suffering...
Only that
created in pain and anger has a mouth and a voice to eject
the word from itself. Let your movement in words
be decisive and violent as a blow in some kind
of Eastern martial art that can
never be repeated. There is no announcement in the poem.

The author's voice firstly diminishes and almost brutally negates the significance of what has been written; at the same time, like Borislav Radović, he will laugh at the reader and the critic for trying to interpret something that claims to be eternal and immutable in its value and significance. The outstanding relativism of the poetic sense represented here by Danilov's lyrical subject is related to the destruction of any ontological objectivity of anything written, as well as the subjective, immanent need for parsing of an implied meaning. The poet suggests that the poem itself, as well as the interpretive effort of the protean nature, are therefore relational categories on whose changes depend both the status of the poem and the status of the reading itself. Only those poems (meaning not any of them) that have arisen from the hell of suffering, or from creative anger that slightly reminds of the God's, open up the possibility of the interpretation, that is, a kind of *reading on the move*, where the very limit of the interpretation constitutes the meaning. This "powerful movement in words" thus applies both to the poet and the reader. A seemingly noncommittal pact was thus signed between them, so that the lyrical subject would reconsider the characteristics of words and poems, giving specific "instructions":

Every spoken word is dead, something
 That yesterday was a form today is already on its last leg.
 My yesterday's words are no longer my words:
 They are changing while being uttered. That is why
 our words are a bit like our children who
 are not our children, but sons and daughters of *longing*
for life with their own selves.....
 Only the imperfection is
 endless, the only stability is movement, immobility
 takes to illness. When you write a poem, if you know what you are doing,
 you don't know what you are doing. In the poem nothing can survive
 as a museum. The poem is not a fortified town. What you used to
 write does not remember any more what you had written, not even
 who you are.

In the further course of this auto-poetic debate, the word and the form are necessarily treated as a kind of *dead poem*, followed by – a well-known metaphor from the tradition – poems as children, as orphans. The lyrical Self, on the one hand, depends on the spoken word, because despite the change they preserve the testimony of him, and on the other, completely exclude him from the aura of their radiation, denying the poet's "fatherhood". On a poetic plane, this kind of relativism, and even nihilism, points to the poet's reinterpretation of the "death of the author", of which the created text has no further knowledge, since it is not recalled or remembered. It, too, was created as a result of the force of single wave of inspiration, that specific swirl of insane power. The words change during the speech and writing, they do not recognize their author or the meaning of what has been written. The poet therefore says that "in a poem nothing can survive as a museum." The value of the words is in constant change of the order of meaning and reading, without pretending to be the catalogue of perfect, isolated and closed works. It is as if both the poem and the reader, as well as the poet, testify much more about the former forms of the poetic identity and voice, by previous poetic words and their interdependence.

Conversely, there is a current, real state of constant seduction with new and different forms of otherness (especially love poems from the second cycle of "The Torch for the Babylonian Daughter", or the poems of critical charge with motifs from the domain of birds and animals), trying out the role of local satirist and polemicist, the ironization of the traditional myth on the ancestors and the inheritors (the poems from the third cycle of "The Raft"). Finally, repetition, always different, and an authentic attempt to reconcile one's self and the poem, finding the compliance that enables both the lyrical subject and the text to co-live, that is, erotic conquest of life, as opposed to transience, an unstoppable flow that symbolizes the "mind of the raging river." Such are, for example, the texts "Poems are my lungs", "Mind of Raging river", "The Network", "Siesta", "Tall, Bright Rooms", "Epistle to the Father", "The Waves", all from

the first cycle. Speaking of his poetic ancestors, the lyrical subject denounces them at the same time, rejecting their “bread and wine.” In painstakingly digging out and rejecting the words, the poem is the only way to be alive, to breathe (“Poems are my lungs and my insomnia”). This is why Danilov’s lyrical hero travels either into himself or to the border of the unreachable worlds of the living and the dead, “where God issues the fares and stays.” But at the same time, it is only possible in this language, the mother tongue, the Serbian language, which injures the poet like the poisonous arrows of Saint Sebastian and comforts like a mother’s lap, feeding weakness, not strength in him.

Despite doubts about the primary foundation of the poetic word, D. J. Danilov does not doubt in its civilizational and humanistic significance (“I don’t want to be a human being in a digital way”). At the cost of dysfunctionality, an isolated island destiny, the poet wants to preserve the ancient and (post)modern relics of poetic inspiration: the soul, the heart, the house of the body. And the body is, as in D. J. Danilov’s numerous previous collections, the impetus for confronting the measure of self-endurance and vulnerability, anxiety and fear of powerlessness and deafness: “There are no two hearts that are beating equally, it is unreasonable/ for two souls to be the one. But my body is your house and I / have nothing to show you in it, take from my chambers everything/you want, what you don’t take wasn’t mine”. It is, at the same time, a mystical conduit of life energy and its decline, a sign of the solitary presence of a wave rising from the ocean and an obvious trace of the poet’s retreat into “the internal migrations.”

Bojana STOJANOVIĆ PANTOVIĆ

Translated from Serbian by
Ljubica Jankov

A COLLECTION WITHIN THE COLLECTION

Dejan Ilić, *The Pleistos Valley*, National Library “Stefan Prvovenčani”, Kraljevo
2017

“Travelling is an erotic act, / writing out the text across the body of the earth. / But not as the will of discovering, rather walking /over the marked places. / Elaboration of something already determined, taxonomy / two different views, thinking up / of angle, multiplication of perspectives. / Waiting for the story of the journey to be quieted, / the distance itself /to tell its own traveller”. Dejan Ilić (1961) even in the first collection of poems *Figures* (1995)

through this untitled poem anticipates the basic thematic-motive line of his poetry, from which, if we compare all nine books of poetry he published, he did not deviate to a greater extent.

In that sense, the new manuscript *The Pleistos Valley* does not bring about more significant poetic changes: all the motives are present, which, in Ilić's case, have risen even to the level of topos, such as travelling, summer holiday, sea, driving along the open (motor)way and the like. The family-intimistic atmosphere, the diachronic understanding of time and space, and simple, unpretentious language and subtle points all reappear as constants of Ilić's lyrical expression. The lyrical subject, however, this time speaks from the territory of Greece and, partly, Italy, immersed in the ancient and Hellenic tradition and all the historical and civilizational potential that belongs to it, so the reader is a witness of his efforts to describe the action of history, but also of the Mediterranean nature in the fragments of human reality and everyday life.

The formal organization of this collection is unusual: it opens with a kind of prologue poem, "Plutarch", in which the lyrical subject, after receiving Plutarch's twenty-five-year-old book, is encouraged to reflect on the ephemerality, the collision of ancient and contemporary, past and present: "How only Greek and Latin / names echo, groups of consonants and voices / of commanders-in-chief, how the youth of the world bursts / in my already old blood". Emphasizing the contrast between the old and the young, that one from *then* and this one from *now*, announcing the thematic-motive pattern, as well as the poetic backbone of the whole book, and it can be said that this poem figures as a kind of overture to the collection.

The Pleistos Valley, thus, contains six cycles, where the first and the last one, like the announcement, are preceded by a motto or quotation, a procedure characteristic of Ilić's poetry. The first cycle, after which the entire collection was named, is encouraging for the overall consideration of the poetic text, since it contains three smaller sub-cycles, marked only with Roman numerals, and at the same time takes up most of the collection. The second cycle, "after", consists of only one poem, which summarizes the experiences and the feelings of the first cycle, while the focal point of the third cycle, "Beautiful Summer", an obsessive motif of summer and summer holidays, which Ilić has varied in his poetry in numerous ways so far. The fourth cycle, "At Home?", however, brings a thematic range different from the previous cycles, which sets it apart from the rest of the book. "Camps", the fifth cycle, focuses on travelling around Italy and the particular fascination with the Venetian small squares, and the sixth cycle, "Feedback", marks the revaluation of life experience and "lesson learned".

It could be said that the first cycle, with its three smaller sub-cycles, almost forms a separate poetic manuscript, and we will therefore pay the greatest attention to it. The reader, like the sea that is often evoked, is overwhelmed by the depictions, landscapes, images and numerous historical ref-

erences that the textual tissue of the poems has been furrowed. In modern day life, especially during the touristic sightseeing, the meeting between the ancient and the modern; the beatings of the old world could be felt: “We were entering Pelopo’s country, / on the other hand, cautiously and silently / as if echo and anger were still coming, / from the depths of the sea, maritime conflicts / worlds that took place / near this place” (“Lepanto”). A lyrical subject, aware of the civilizational significance that places he visits contain, puts the historical events and data through the filter of imagination and fictitious upgrade, which reinforces his experiences with particular dynamics. Likewise, however, his artistic-existential observations are often marked by the need to be present at a given moment and to relate with the present, without necessarily evoking the ancient period: “I do not imagine naked / oily bodies, I do not imagine what it used to be / all of this” (“O.”).

It is almost impossible to avoid plenty of toponyms that emerge from poem to poem – after all, the very name of the collection suggests the kind of topoanalysis by which the subject attempts to reconstruct his fragile existence in the world: Lepanto, Peloponnesus, Dimicana, Mystras, Kastraki, Athens, Thessaloniki, are just a few parts of Greece and the locations which the lyrical protagonist visits, writing down his poetic map. The line of hedonistic, sensual poetry is also present, which involves the enjoyment in smells, food and drink, and which almost simulates the epicurean understanding of external stimuli. Ilić is here almost in collusion with the Greek poets Anacreon or Alcaeus: “On the square they offer olives, sheep cheese and oil / we took a little of everything, and the oranges / which are eternal here, bloom when fall” (“in Dimicana”); “Thanks for the breakfast, / served in your garden, / marmalade of home grown quinces, / sheep’s milk, olives, and smell / all those herbs in innumerable / pots, which spoke in their / distant spicy languages” (“Mystras, April 2013.”); “The olives were bursting / pressed, in spirit, and mixed with the heightened feelings, reaching / the unusual catharsis” (“E.”).

One of the distinctive features of Ilić’s poetry is so-called poem-picture, poem-situation, experience or just a description of the scene presented through the simple descriptive verses. And this collection abounds in them; a lyrical hero, inert and powerless facing the amazing nature, entirely subordinates himself to it and coalesces with it: “On these roads, each stopping / is a risk, grave, abyss I would happily fall into” (untitled). He indulges with the images and sensory stimuli that surround him from all sides but remains a passive observer; the focus is moved onto space and time, and the subject merely coexists there and is part of this elaborate complex. A real example of such a poem-picture would be a poem with the dedication “Near Monemvasia”: “Bench at the bend, with a view / onto the sea, where no one sits, / people in cars that rarely / pass. By the road, scents, myrtle, / rosemary, St. John’s Wort. / Glance sees the view”. The lyrical subject talks about the scenes and land-

scapes in a calm, unpretentious way subtly shading the images with melancholy, but also with a kind of mystical existential serenity.

The aforementioned intimistic-family atmosphere in which the journey takes place also contributes to it. Namely, the lyrical hero does not travel and does not go through all this alone, but often involves a close female person (a daughter or a wife) in the dialogue, so the poem is realized in the second person singular: "You don't like the sandwich/ you eat." They're dry, petrified "(untitled), or: "When you saw these weird, hilarious urns, / behind the glass, in the showcase of the museum, you couldn't / believe that they were so old and dug up and cleaned up just for you to see them" ("Hilarious Urns"). This poem is also characteristic of crossing the two worlds and two times: "Mycenaean figurines, before the Archaic smile, / arms raised up as if rejoice in something, / were there for you (...) / extended / hand of the present, the meeting of the two glowing / and so distant childhoods." Joining the associative links from the world of history, art, philosophy, etc. depicts a certain tendency of the author towards a kind of time-historical diachrony, a reflection of the present moment into the past and vice versa. On a cognitive plane, every single thing, every external stimulus and moment can be the beginning of understanding and interpretation of the world. This is confirmed by the poem "The Isthmus", in which a potent historical context is given through an elective, casual story ("(...) then, you know, / when the plague broke out and Pericles / began to lose / threads. Then chaos in Athens / and his death soon"), in contrast to the smelly, impersonal and gray industrial zone into which they went into. The lyrical hero and his entourage want to create their personal (ancient) temple, a refuge in an environment full of giants made of metal, factories and refineries, wishing that the gods would interfere in their destiny, in this earthly life, as in ancient tragedies. In a similar manner, a poem bearing the name of the collection, "The Pleistos Valley," is dedicated to a French writer and passionate scholar of classical literature and ancient Greece, Jacques Lacarrière. He observes the Greek villagers how in the valley where the oracle used to be founded "transport their precious cargo" and "that oil, / in which, still, in the sun, their fate / is being reflected."

The second and third sub-cycles of the first cycle mainly thematizes travelling to Athens and Thessaloniki when the tourist season is over, which is also one of the constants of Ilić's poetry. The lyrical hero is motionless in the Mediterranean paradise and overwhelmed with sensory impressions: he registers colours, smells, birds chirping and it seems to him that "every thing is so real, more real / than real, but not surreal" ("Great Music"). The same is true of the poem from the third cycle, "The Upper Town": "The smell of morning pastries from the neighbouring houses, / the first birds in the sky. Width of view, spring, / warm air from the sea". These simple, seemingly banal images carved into the memory of the lyrical subject, turn out to be basic, closest and the most natural to man; seemingly earthly, but in fact

primary, originally, stripped of every mystification and the aura of civilization and culture. Greece, on the other hand, possesses something primordial, authentic, which cannot be taken over, stolen or mimeticized, and is reflected in every layer of its reality, even in the harmless image of a shepherd with his sheep on the hill ("Shepherd").

The only poem of the second cycle, entitled "After", summarizes the impressions of the first cycle and can be understood in terms of "what happened after the journey". The lyrical hero re-engages the other person in the implicit dialogue, but he also evokes the important autopoietic question of writing poetry and creation: "and I wonder, then, who of the two of us, you or me / will really be able to bring this description of Hellas/ to the poem?" It seems that this would be quite appropriate ending to the poetic manuscript that would give the collection "*The Pleistos Valley*" a nice roundness as a meaningful and thematically-motivated completeness. Ilić, however, continues to write the poetic text in the subsequent cycles, which rather function as a repetition and variation of the motives and situations already present (in this or in the earlier collections), without a major change in the linguistic style, emotionality or atmosphere. "Beautiful Summer" focuses on the father-daughter relationship that is, again, presented through the motif of summer and summer holidays, enjoying nature and the like: "After three years of drought, electric / sky, and the landscape, even in August, green. (...) / And on the very top/ the glitter, the rain stopped, we stopped there/ and we, you who is growing up, me who is growing old (...)" ("The Pass").

The fifth cycle, "Fields", through twelve poems, focuses on the journey through Italy, with particular emphasis on Venetian fields, small squares, where the spiritual and mental journey of the lyric subject takes place. Like the first cycle, "Fields" contain many poem-pictures that are on the track of sketches, scenes, storiottes, and notes. In the same manner of describing, the lyrical Self returns again to the *silence of centuries* and to the awareness of the cultural-historical potential that the space possesses. It seems that there is a lot of "idle" in the poetic text and the extensive descriptiveness, though the poem is mostly resolved in a particular direction that subtly hints certain metaphysical or existential sense: "The fountain from which the water constantly/ flows, is a stopover/ a place for a short break/ and refreshment / of long caravans of tourists / who suddenly /reach /this plateau" ("Field, 4").

The exception, however, is the fourth cycle, "At Home?" which brings completely different corpus of motifs and poetic mood, as if it does not belong to the rest of the collection. The highly successful, dramatic and striking "The Dead Man" and "When You Automatically Turn the Phone" depict the condition of a person after the death of a loved one and how those who are left behind deal with the death: "Dead man's things are laughing at you / as well as those taken to the grave / they just pretend to be here". A few more poems

of a longer, narrative, intermittently tedious verse belong to this cycle, for example “We Have not Identified the Cities” and “Bad Country”, but it is impossible to get rid of the impression that we are present at the development of another poetic manuscript. The final, sixth cycle, “Feedback”, announces existential optimism, firstly by the motto of Mark Aurelius: “Almost everything is right”, then brings poems / feedback, a kind of “life advice” that the lyrical subject sends to the reader, but also to himself: “Always remember the worst thing that/ happened to you, always remember the hardest/ day in your life. / There is nothing more healing, / more useful thing that makes you more / human” (“Remember the Worst”). All the thematic and conceptual flows of this collection are merged into one in the final poem “Autogrill”: the lyrical voice concludes that “our obligation is to go / further, to fulfill the duties of the road”, and that finally “almost everything is right”.

The Pleistos Valley is a spontaneous continuation of Ilić’s previous poetic oeuvre – stylistic and linguistic consistencies, and serene atmosphere, strengthened by description, occasionally shakes up a sense of amazement or a rhetorical question, turn out to be the main features of the author’s expression in the new book. There is, however, noticeable incoherence and illogical linearity when it comes to the formal organization and the composition of the poetic text. This extensive collection (which is also one of its imperfections) of as many as sixty-three poems almost contains enough material for two books of poetry. The first part of the collection (the first and second cycle) thus forms a separate collection, and from the third cycle as if the possibilities for continuation of the book have been exhausted, so the second part of the collection seems insufficiently exciting, recycling or varying of what has already been said.

In the transition from the external to the internal, from the object to the subject the mental horizon of Ilić’s lyrical voice is being formed; during the leap from the idealized world of history and formative civilization period into the imperfect, real world, a ball of subtle and quiet existential meditation unwinds. The experience of everyday life is individualized; however, there is no dialogue with the self and the introspection in the classical sense. It occurs most often through some observation, sight, or apprehensive observation, which is where the discursive movement begins. Then new layers of experience open up that take the poem into a certain direction. Despite its many historical references and names, history in Ilić’s collection does not appear as a series of facts, but rather serves as a key to understanding the individualized mythical matrix that the lyrical subject is obsessed by.

Katarina PANTOVIĆ

Translated from Serbian by
Ljubica Jankov

THE PILLARS OF SERBIAN EDUCATION

Aleksandra Novakov, *The Pillars of Serbian Education. Serbian Secondary Schools in the Ottoman Empire 1878–1912*, Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike /Public Institute for Textbooks, 2017, 543 p.

The period after the Congress of Berlin in 1878 was marked by the struggle for recognition of Serbian ethnicity in the Ottoman Empire. In the Ottoman Empire, the church carried the mark of nationality and was organized according to a system of *milletus*, which represented religious-educational communities with financial authorities. The Bulgarians had their own church – the Exarchate which was founded in 1871, the Greeks had the Patriarchate, and only the Serbs were labeled as Rum Millet – Christians.

Historical sources may refer to one term that best describes the rivalry of the Balkan states (Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Romania) in the struggle to preserve the national and religious identity of the population in the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, which can be called “cultural match.” Opening schools, printing textbooks, founding bookstores, distribution of books, and organization of church-school municipalities in the Ottoman Empire were the first serious systematic steps taken by Serbia in that field. Serbia showed its seriousness in its work during the time of Prime Minister Milutin Garašanin (1884–1886), and especially when Stojan Novaković (1886–1892) represented Serbia as a Member of Parliament in Constantinople. Great success was achieved by establishing consulates of the Kingdom of Serbia in Skopje, Bitola, Thessaloniki and Priština.

The initiator of cultural and educational work in the Ottoman Empire was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, namely its Political-Educational, or “PE Department”, on whose head was Vladimir Karić firstly, in 1889. It was his thought that Serbian idea could not be spread without a Serbian school, which led to the intensification of the educational campaign. Patriarchal privileges and the Turkish Law on Public Teaching presented major obstacles to the opening of Serbian schools. Therefore, the founding and functioning of Serbian lower and upper gymnasiums are among the most important achievements of the Serbs in the Ottoman Empire. Although Serbian schools were not only educational but also the institutions of social and political importance, Serbian historiography did not systematically study them. Today, the situation is much different, thanks to the monograph by Aleksandra Novakov, which is dedicated to the history of the six pillars of Serbian education, that is, six Serbian secondary schools in the Ottoman Empire – The Seminary in Prizren (1871–1912), Serbian Gymnasium in Constantinople (1893–1902), and Serbian Gymnasium “The House of Science” in Thessaloniki (1894–1910), Serbian Gymnasium in Skopje (1894–1912), Serbian Gymnasium in Bitola (1897–1912) and Serbian Gymnasium in Pljevlja (1901–1912).

Lately, there has been a tendency for publishing books without scientific or critical apparatus. This monograph is the exact opposite, because Aleksandra Novakov presents numerous facts based on unpublished historical sources that she has come to in extensive archival research. Unfortunately, almost all school archives were destroyed in the First World War, so it was more difficult to reconstruct the life and work of Serbian gymnasiums. The author also used numerous published historical sources, travel books, memoirs, newspapers, magazines, as well as substantial literature of several hundred bibliographic units.

It is not surprising that the most extensive chapter in the book deals with the Prizren Seminary, whose founding Aleksandra Novakov sees as a turning point in the educational and cultural-political life of the Serbs in the Ottoman Empire. The Seminary in Prizren was founded in 1871 as a school for the education of priests and the teachers too, for whom there was a great need in Old Serbia and Macedonia. It worked successfully, with short interruptions, until 1912. The Seminary in Prizren spread the important educational and spiritual mission among the Serbian people. The educational mission was carried out by the teachers, who were legally required to be citizens of the Ottoman Empire. The spiritual mission rested on educated and literate priests, who had to withstand the pressure of the Bulgarian Exarchate, the Hellenization of the Greek Patriarchate, the forced Islamization and Albanization and propaganda of the Catholic Church. The Seminary endured thanks to the persons who were responsible for its founding: representatives of the Serbian authorities in Belgrade, Sima Andrejević Igumanov and his Fund, tutors of the Fund and Russian Consul Ivan Stepanovich Jastrebov. For decades, it was the pillar on which the entire Serbian education rested upon, as its theologians worked as teachers and priests throughout the Ottoman Empire, wherever the Serbs lived. The Seminary in Prizren was also a political propaganda institution, as it represented a kind of consulate of Serbia until the official opening of consulates in Turkey. Its teachers played the important role, as they were appointed as the first headmasters of the new Serbian secondary schools – Sima Popović was the first headmaster of the newly founded Serbian Male High School in Skopje, Vasilije Desić the first headmaster of Serbian Gymnasium in Constantinople, Petar Kostić the first headmaster of Serbian Gymnasium “The House of Science” in Thessaloniki and Sava Jakić the first headmaster of Serbian Gymnasium in Bitola. The pupils of seminary became professors, teachers, bishops, national workers, traders, clerks, lawyers, judges, and among them there were two patriarchs of Serbian Orthodox Church, Varnava Rosić and Gavriilo Dožić. The author calls The Seminary in Prizren a “Serbian consolation and shield” and a “nursery of education and national work” of Serbs in the Ottoman Empire.

The first Serbian secular secondary school in the Ottoman Empire was considered Serbian Gymnasium in Constantinople, founded in 1893. Its

significance is that it paved the way for the opening of other secondary schools within the empire. Some of the teachers were outstanding professionals and scholars (Stanoje Stanojević, Jovan Radonić), and the pupils themselves became the teachers of Serbian secondary schools. Unfortunately, the gymnasium was closed as early as 1902. The Serbian gymnasium "House of Science" was opened in 1894 in Thessaloniki as the center of the vilayet. Its opening accelerated the issue of permits for other elementary schools throughout the vilayet, which was very difficult until 1897. That gymnasium, which was considered an elite school, was enrolled by pupils with completed elementary school and who passed the entrance exam in Serbian language and mathematics, had appropriate behaviour with pronounced national feelings. It was closed in 1910, but its pupils completed their education at Gymnasium in Skopje.

Serbian male gymnasium in Skopje was also opened in 1894, after a lengthy diplomatic battle with the Ottoman authorities. The main obstacle to its existence was the national propaganda centers of other countries – Bulgaria and Greece. The school played a major role in spreading Serbian national thought. The result of the work of the gymnasium in Skopje was a complete reversal of the current situation. Namely, in the eighties of the 19th century, the opening of a Serbian elementary school was not allowed in Skopje, but after the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, the city became the political centre of Serbian people in the Ottoman Empire. A large number of Skopje gymnasium teachers and pupils participated in Serbian Chetnik campaign in Turkey and were part of Serbian army in the Balkan Wars.

The opening of the lower Serbian gymnasium in Bitola in 1897 enabled the founding of primary schools throughout the Bitola Vilayet. With the founding of a gymnasium in Pljevlja in 1901, a cultural and educational center was created which educated the local Serbian intelligentsia and became counterbalance to the Austro-Hungarian cultural influence until 1912. Serbian gymnasiums were very well territorially situated: three schools were located in the Kosovo Vilayet where there were most Serbs, one each in Bitola and Thessaloniki Vilayet and one in Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman Empire.

Aleksandra Novakov's book is beyond the scope of a monograph on education, giving much broader review of the social, political and cultural movements and the organization of Serbian people in the Ottoman Empire. It deals with the situation in Prizren, Constantinople, Thessaloniki, Skopje, Bitola and Pljevlja at the time of the opening and operating of the gymnasiums, describing the working conditions and position of teachers and pupils. The great value of this monograph represents the tabular overview of the curricula, textbooks and timetables. The charts provide a synthesis of knowledge about the structure of pupils, their ethnic and social backgrounds (percentage of the clerical, artisan, merchant, agricultural and janitor families), age and

number of pupils, as well as their later role in the society. Aleksandra Novakov writes using clear language. In almost vivid pictures we can see what the school day was like, what the pupils were wearing, how they were fed and what their favourite subjects were. Dealing with each of the pillars of Serbian education in the Ottoman Empire, the author also enriched by giving reviews on the libraries as well. It is interesting that during the work of Serbian gymnasium in Thessaloniki, there were two or three libraries: for the teachers, which had professional literature and other useful books; for pupils which had books by the world writers in Serbian and French; and a library of banned books – works by national writers and a collection of Serbian folk songs – which, because of their content, could not pass Turkish censorship and because of that were kept in Serbian consulate.

In all the chapters, the author paid attention to the building of spirit and national consciousness and to the educational and political-propaganda importance of the gymnasiums. Serbian secondary schools in the Ottoman Empire created Serbian intelligence (teachers, priests, professors, doctors, lawyers, and businessmen) and influenced the formation of Serbian civil society. Secondary schools, on the other hand, were a reliance of Chetnik action, in which both pupils and teachers actively participated. Aleksandra Novakov concluded that the schools met their expectations. Shortly before the First Balkan War, 414 Serbian educators worked in 262 Serbian schools, which were attended by 9947 pupils. Insisting on the development of education was a far-sighted policy of the Kingdom of Serbia, which ultimately gave Serbs the advantage in a “cultural match”.

It is certain that the *The Pillars of Serbian Education* will serve as a pillar for the researchers in their further dealing with the topic of the history of the Serbs in the Ottoman Empire. The book is rich in illustrations, obtained by the author during her archival research. Public Institute for Textbooks also deserves commendations, primarily for having the understanding to publish such a significant monograph, but also for its high-quality appearance. *The Pillars of Serbian Education* will surely be among the best editions of this publishing house in 2017.

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¹ The overthrow of Milošević was accompanied by the slogan (shouted by the crowds and written across posters) "Gotov je!" ("He's Finished!") during the protests following the 2000 presidential elections when the leader rejected to acknowledge the first-round victory of Vojislav Koštunica. – *Translator's note.*

Demontaža kulture: prilozi za sociologiju srpskog društva [*Disassembling Culture: Contributions to the Sociology of the Serbian Society*, 2016].

MARJAN ČAKAREVIĆ (b. Čačak, 1978) writes poetry, essays and literary reviews; in addition, he is a translator from English. He took his B.A. and M.A. in Serbian and World Literatures at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. Books of verse: *Paragrad* [*Para-City*, 1999]; *Sistem* [*The System*, 2011]; *Jezik* [*Language*, 2014]; *7 reči grada* [*7 Words of the City*, 2014]; *Tkiva* [*Tissues*, 2016].

JOVAN DELIĆ (b. Borkovići near Plužine, Montenegro, 1949) writes literary criticism and essays. Books: *Kritičarevi paradoksi* [*The Paradoxes of a Critic*, 1980]; *Srpski nadrealizam i roman* [*The Serbian Surrealism and Novel*, 1980]; *Pjesnik „Patetike uma“ (o pjesništvu Pavla Popovića)* [*The Poet of “The Pathos of the Mind” (on the poetry of Pavle Popović)*, 1983]; *Tradicija i Vuk Stefanović Karadžić* [*Tradition and Vuk Stefanović Karadžić*, 1990]; *Hazarska prizma – tumačenje proze Milorada Pavića* [*The Khazarian Prism: An Interpretation of the Fiction by Milorad Pavić*, 1991]; *Književni pogledi Danila Kiša* [*The Literary Views of Danilo Kiš*, 1995]; *Kroz prozu Danila Kiša* [*Across the Prose by Danilo Kiš*, 1997]; *O poeziji i poetici srpske moderne* [*On the Poetry and Poetic Practices of the Serbian Modernism*, 2008]; *Ivo Andrić – Most i žrtva* [*Ivo Andrić: The Bridge and Sacrifice*, 2011]; *Ivan V. Lalić i njemačka lirika – jedno intertekstualno istraživanje* [*Ivan V. Lalić and German Lyric Poetry: An Intertextual Research*, 2011]. Delić has edited a number of books by and on Serbian authors.

SUNČICA DENIĆ (b. Ugljare near Priština, 1956) writes poetry, fiction, literary criticism, essays and studies. Books of verse: *Pogodba* [*A Deal*, 1985]; *Pleme u snu* [*The Sleeping Tribe*, 1989]; *Klupko* [*Hank*, 1994]; *Obrnuta godina* [*Inverted Year*, 1997]; *Nevreme* [*Ill-Timed*, 2016]; *Matica* [*Fountainhead*, 2017]. Novels: *Tri sveta – priča koja nije stala u roman* [*Three Worlds: The Story a Novel Couldn't Hold*, 2008]; *Svet izvan* [*The World Beyond*, 2014]. Studies: *Retorika* [*Rhetoric*, a handbook for teachers' colleges, co-authored with V. Cenić, 1995]; *Književno delo Manojla Đorđevića Prizrenca* [*The Literary Work of Manojlo Đorđević Prizrenac*, 2003]; *Opšte i lično – ogledi o književnosti* [*The General and the Personal: Essays on Literature*, 2005]; *Književnost – izbor književnih i književnonaučnih tekstova* [*Literature: Selected Literary and Literary-Scholarly Writings*, 2007]; *Srpski pisci na Kosovu i Metohiji (1871–1941)* [*Serbian Authors in Kosovo and Metohija (1871–1941)*, 2008]; *Mera i privid – etikom do književne estetike* [*Measure and Pretence: Through Ethics toward Esthetics*, 2010]; *Progon i zavičaj – srpska književnost Kosova i Metohije*; [*Exile and Native Land: Serbian Literature in Kosovo and Metohija*, 2011]; *Bibliografija radova nastavnika i saradnika*

Učiteljskog fakulteta u Vranju: 1993–2013 [*A Bibliography of the Studies Written by the Teaching and Associate Staff of the Teacher-Training Faculty in Vranje 1993–2013*, co-authored with Nenad Dejković, 2013]; *Književnost za decu: krila za začarani let* [*Children's Literature: The Wings for a Spell-binding Flight*, 2014]; *Poetički modeli između tradicije i savremenog u srpskoj književnosti* [*Poetic Patterns between Tradition and the Contemporary in Serbian Literature*, 2019].

MIŠA ĐURKOVIĆ (b. Belgrade, 1971) is a philosopher, theoretician of politics and publicist who studied at Belgrade's Faculty of Philosophy where he got his B.A. (1996), M.A. (2001) and Ph.D. (2005, title of the thesis reading "Liberalism and the State: The Political Philosophy of John Stuart Mill"). His pursuits include philosophy, political and legal theory, issues of national identity within international relations, phenomena of popular culture and processes of European integration, as well as translation work (from English). Books: *Poredak, moral i ljudska prava* [*Social Order, Morals and Human Rights*, 2001]; *Diktatura, nacija, globalizacija* [*Dictatorship, Nation, Globalization*, 2002]; *Kapitalizam, liberalizam i država* [*Capitalism, Liberalism and the State*, 2005]; *Kraj i početak – politika i kultura u Srbiji 1999–2005* [*The End and the Beginning: Politics and Culture in Serbia 1999–2005*, 2006]; *Politička misao Džona Stjuarta Mila* [*The Political Thought of John Stuart Mill*, 2006]; *Konzervativizam i konzervativne stranke* [*Conservatism and Conservative Parties*, 2007]; *Slika, zvuk i moć – ogledi iz pop-politike* [*Image, Sound and Power: Essays on Pop Politics*, 2009]; *Medologija – vesele priče o medama* [*Bear-Ology: Funny Tales about Bears* (for children), 2011]; *Narodna kultura u kulturnoj politici Srbije* [*Folk Culture in Serbia's Cultural Policy*, co-authored with D. Vujadinović, 2011]; *Ideologija, partije i međunarodni odnosi* [*Ideology, Parties and International Relations: Essays on Politics*, 2012]; *Tamni koridori moći* [*The Dark Corridors of Power*, 2013]; *Turska regionalna sila?* [*Turkey – A Regional Power?*, 2013]; *Iluzija Evropske unije* [*The Illusion of the European Union*, 2015]; *Konzervativizam i konzervativne stranke* [*Conservatism and Conservative Parties*, 2016]; *Desna misao u XX veku* [*The Rightist Thought in the 20th Century*, 2019]; *Rat za porodicu u Srbiji* [*Fighting for the Family in Serbia*, 2019].

DRAGAN HAMOVIĆ (b. Kraljevo, 1970) writes poetry, essays and literary reviews. Books of verse: *Mrakovi, ruge* [*Dark Moments, Mockery*, 1992]; *Nameštenik* [*An Employee*, 1994]; *Matična knjiga* [*Civil Register*, 2007]; *Album ranih stihova* [*An Album of Early Verse*, 2007]; *Žeženo i nežno* [*With Fervour and Tenderness*, 2012]; *Zmaj u jajetu – naivne pesme* [*A Dragon in the Egg: Naïve Poems*, 2013]; *Tiska – pesme i poneki zapis* [*The Rush: Poems and a Note Here and There*, 2015]; *Meko jezgro – pesme s pratećom pričom* [*Soft Kernel: Poems with Accompanying Tales*, 2016]; *Popravljam uspomene*

[*I Mend Recollections*, 2017]; *Bežanijska Kosa – pesme i venac malih priča* [*Bežanijska Kosa*.² *Poems and a Garland of Minor Tales*, 2018]; *Izvod iz matične knjige* [*A Certificate from the Civil Register*, 2019]; *Rođen kao zmaj: pesme dečje i nimalo naivne* [*Born like a dragon: poems childish and not at all naïve*, 2019]. Books of essays and reviews: *Stvari ovdašnje* [*Local Affairs*, 1998]; *Pesničke stvari* [*Matters of Poetry*, 1999]; *Poslednje i prvo* [*The Ultimate and the Foremost*, 2003]; *S obe strane* [*From Both Sides*, 2006]; *Leto i citati – poezija i poetika Jovana Hristića* [*Summertime and Citations: The Poetry and Poetics of Jovan Hristić*, 2008]; *Pesma od početka* [*Poem from the Beginning*, 2009]; *Raičković – pesnički razvoj i poetičko okruženje* [*Raičković: The Poet's Evolution and His Poetic Milieu*, 2011]; *Matični prostor* [*Home Territory*, 2012]; *Put ka uspravnoj zemlji – moderna srpska poezija i njena kulturna samosvest* [*The Way to an Upright Country: Modern Serbian Poetry and Its Cultural Self-Consciousness*, 2016]; *Momo traži Kapora – problem identiteta u Kaporovoj prozi* [*Momo in Search of Kapor: The Identity Issue in Kapor's Prose*, 2016]; *Preko veka – iz srpske poezije XX i XXI stoleća* [*A Century and Beyond: From the Serbian Poetry of the 20th and 21st Centuries*, 2017]; *Lica jednine* [*Persons Singular*, 2018]. Dr. Hamović has also edited a number of books.

Rt. Revd. IRINEJ BULOVIĆ (b. Stanišić near Sombor, 1947) was upon birth christened as Mirko. He graduated from the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade (1969), then pursued further studies in Athens and Paris before defending his doctoral dissertation at the University of Athens in 1980; the title of the latter reads “The Key of Distinguishing the Divine Essence and Energies in the Holy Trinity according to St. Mark Eugenikos of Ephesus”. Since 1981, he has been lecturing at Belgrade's Faculty of Theology. In 1990, Rt. Revd. Irinej became Bishop of the Bačka Diocese. The above-mentioned dissertation was published in 1991 under the title *Tajna razlikovanja božanske suštine i energije u Svetoj Trojici po Svetome Marku Efeskom Evgeniku* [*The Key of Distinguishing the Divine Essence and Energies in the Holy Trinity according to St. Mark of Ephesus Eugenikos*].

DARINKA JEVRIĆ (Glodani near Peć, 1947–Belgrade, 2007) wrote poetry, worked as a journalist and received a number of literary awards. Books of verse: *Dodir leta* [*A Touch of Summertime*, co-authored with R. Deletić and B. Todić, 1970]; *Prevareni tišinom* [*Deceived by Silence*, 1973]; *Nestvarni zapisi* [*Unreal Records*, 1976]; *Ižice* [*The Last Letters*,³ 1980]; *Hvostanska zemlja* [*The Soil of Hvosno*, 1990]; *Slovo ljubve* [*A Word of Love*, selected verse, 1990]; *Judin poljubac* [*The Kiss of Judas*, 1998]; *Dečanska zvona i druge pesme* [*The Bells of Dečani and Other Poems*, selected verse, 2004]; *Psalam*

² *Bežanijska kosa* is a residential quarter in the Municipality of New Belgrade, the City of Belgrade, on the left bank of the Sava River. – *Translator's note*.

³ In the Old Slavonic alphabet, *ižica* was the last letter, the first being *az*. – *Translator's note*.

bezdomnika i druge pesme [*A Psalm of the Home-Deprived and Other Poems*, selected verse, 2006].

ALEKSANDAR JOVANOVIĆ (b. Ratari near Smederevska Palanka, 1949) is an author of studies, essays and literary reviews. Books published: *Kako predavati književnost – teorijske osnove nastave* [*How to Lecture on Literature: Theoretical Basics of Teaching*, 1984]; *Oblaci u duši – pesništvo Dušana Vasiljeva* [*Clouds in the Soul: The Poetry of Dušan Vasiljev*, 1986]; *Pesnici i preci: motivi jezika, tradicije i kulture u posleratnoj srpskoj poeziji* [*Poets and Their Ancestry: The Motifs of Language, Tradition and Culture in the Serbian Postwar Poetry*, 1993]; *Poezija srpskog neosimbolizma: istorija jedne pesničke osećajnosti* [*The Poetry of the Serbian Neo-Symbolism: The History of a Poetic Sensibility*, 1994]; *Poreklo pesme – devet razgovora o poeziji* [*The Origin of the Poem: Nine Talks about Poetry*, 1995]; *Stvaraoci i stvoritelji* [*Creators and The Creator*, three prayer-cantos, 2003]; *Čitanka* (za drugi razred gimnazije i srednjih škola) [*Reader* (for the second grade of grammar school and other secondary schools), 2005]; *Stih i pamćenje: o poeziji i poetici Milosava Tešića* [*Verse and Memory: About the Poetry and Poetics of Milosav Tešić*, 2018]; *O istoriji, sećanjima i samoći: eseji i kritike o srpskoj prozi XX veka* [*On History, Remembrances and Loneliness: Essays and Reviews on 20th Century Serbian Fiction*, 2019]. A. Jovanović has edited a number of books and collections/proceedings of studies.

BOJAN JOVANOVIĆ (b. Niš, 1950) is an ethnologist who writes poetry, essays, reviews and anthropological studies, additionally pursuing alternative film art. Books of poetry: *Bacanje kamenčića* [*Stone Skipping*, 1973]; *Kost između obala* [*A Bone between the Banks*, 1981]; *Dušolovac* [*Soulhunter*, 1989]; *Propoved mrava* [*The Sermon of an Ant*, 1993]; *Peščana majka* [*Sand-Mother*, 1996]; *Odlomci božanstva* [*Fragments of Divinity*, 1997]; *Kuća iza oblaka* [*The House behind Clouds*, 1999]; *Nazivi dolazećeg* [*The Names of the Forthcoming*, 2005]; *Senke u tami* [*Shadows in the Darkness*, 2006]; *Govor prozorljivog* [*The Speech of a Diviner*, 2009]; *Sastojci vremena* [*The Ingredients of Time*, 2012]; *Ponovna rođenja* [*Rebirths*, selected and new verse 2015]; *Spasonosne nevolje* [*Beneficial Troubles*, 2017]. Studies: *Srpska knjiga mrtvih* [*The Serbian Book of the Dead*, 1992]; *Magija srpskih obreda* [*The Spell of the Serbian Rites*, 1993]; *Tajna lapota* [*The Mystery of the Lapot*,⁴ 1999]; *Duh paganskog nasleđa u srpskoj tradicionalnoj kulturi* [*The Spirit of Pagan Heritage in the Serbian Traditional Culture*, 2000]; *Klopka za dušu* [*A Trap for the Soul*, 2002]; *Karakter kao sudbina* [*Character as Destiny*, 2002]; *Govor*

⁴ *Lapot* is a kind of ritual geronticide (killing of elderly people) thought by some authors to have really been practised in the eastern parts of Serbia; Bojan Jovanović confronts the opinion, claiming that the ritual senicide is myth, part of the national folklore. – *Translator's note*.

pećinskih senki [*The Speech of Cave Shadows*, 2004]; *Bliskost dalekog* [*The Familiarity of the Remote*, 2005]; *Sudbina i magija – antropološki eseji* [*Destiny and Magic: Essays in Anthropology*, 2007]; *Prkos i inat – etnopsihološke studije* [*Defiance and Spite: Studies in Ethnopsychology*, 2008]; *Rečnik javašluka* [*A Dictionary of Laxity*, 2009]; *Igranje s ništavilom* [*Playing with Nihilism*, 2011]; *Izrečeno i prorečeno ili O predskazanjima kremanskih vidovnjaka* [*The Uttered and the Prophesied, or, On the Prophecies of the Seers from Kremna*,⁵ 2011]; *Ljubav i opraštanje* [*Love and Forgiveness*, 2011]; *Ubijanje starih – kao tradicionalni i naučni mit* [*Killing of the Elderly as a Traditional and a Scholarly Myth*, 2013]; *Mehuri zapenušanih godina – izabrani intervjui* [*The Bubbles of the Storm-Foamed Years: Selected Interviews*, 2013]; *Okolni put* [*The Roundabout Way*, 2013]; *Pamćenje i samozaborav* [*Remembering and Self-Oblivion*, 2014]; *Svetovi antropološke imaginacije* [*The Realms of Anthropological Imagination*, 2014]; *Srpska knjiga mrtvih – tanatologije*, 1 [*The Serbian Book of the Dead – Thanatological Chronicles*, 2015]; *Antropologija zla* [*The Anthropology of Evil*, 2016]; *Tajni interes – pesničko i antropološko iskustvo* [*Secret Interest: Poetic and Anthropological Experience*, 2017]; *Onirički kod – uvod u antropologiju snova* [*The Oneiric Code: An Introduction to the Anthropology of Dreams*, 2017]; *Pamćenje i samozaborav* [*Remembering and Self-Oblivion*, 2018]; *Kraj ambisa* [*The End of the Abyss*, 2018]; *Srpska knjiga mrtvih* [*The Serbian Book of the Dead*, 2019]. Bojan Jovanović has been the editor of a number of books.

SLOBODAN JOVANOVIĆ (Novi Sad, 1869–London, 1958) was a scholar, university professor and politician. After the studies of law in Munich and Geneva (1886–1890), he undertook further education in the fields of international and constitutional law in Paris, at the prestigious *École libre des sciences politique* (1890–1891). Following the years of office at the Ministry of International Affairs, he held a professorship at the Faculty of Law of Belgrade University (*Velika škola*) from 1897 to the retirement in 1940. His research work excellently combined a number of sciences: jurisprudence, history, political science, sociology and theory of law. In 1908, he was elected full member of the Academy of Social Sciences within the Serbian Royal Academy. Due to his anti-socialist political views, Jovanović spent the time of World War Two and the postwar period as an émigré in London, until his death. Books: *O suverenosti: uvodno predavanje iz državnog prava* [*On Sovereignty: An Introductory Lecture on Constitutional Law*, 1897]; *Srpsko-bugarski rat: rasprava iz diplomatske istorije* [*Serbo-Bulgarian War: A*

⁵ “**The seers from Kremna**” refers to the now ‘popular’ men of the 19th-century Tarabić family (or their predecessors) from the village of Kremna near the city of Užice in southwestern Serbia and their alleged manuscript/book *Kremansko proročanstvo* (*The Prophecy of Kremna*). In consequence, the village has recently become a tourist attraction. – *Translator’s note*.

Treatise on Diplomatic History, 1901]; *Osnovi javnog prava Kraljevine Srbije*. Knj. 1, *Ustavno pravo* [*The Foundations of the Public Law in the Kingdom of Serbia*, Vol. I, *Constitutional Law*, 1907]; *Makiaveli* [*Machiavelli*, 1907]; *Političke i pravne rasprave* [*Political and Jurisprudential Considerations*, Vol. I (1908), Vol. II (1910)]; *Ustavobranitelji i njihova vlada (1838–1858)* [*The Constitutionals and Their Rule (1838–1858)*, 1912]; *Svetozar Marković, 1920; Druga vlada Miloša i Mihaila: (1858–1868)* [*The Second Rules of Miloš and Mihailo: (1858–1868)*, 1920]; *Ustavno pravo Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca* [*Constitutional Law of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes*, 1924]; *Vlada Milana Obrenovića* [*The Rule of Milan Obrenović*, Vol. I (1868–1878), 1926; Vol. II (1878–1889), 1927]; *Vlada Aleksandra Obrenovića* [*The Rule of Aleksandar Obrenović*, Vol. I (1889–1897), 1929; Vol. II (1897–1903), 1931]; *Vodi Francuske revolucije* [*The Leaders of the French Revolution*, 1932]; *Političke i pravne rasprave* [*Political and Jurisprudential Considerations*, Vol. III, 1933]; *Iz istorije političkih doktrina I-II* [*From the History of Political Doctrines*, 1935]; *Država I-II* [*The State I-II*, 1935]; *Sociologija religije I-II* [*Sociology of Religion I-II*, 1938]; *Karađorđe i njegove vojvode* [*Karadjordje and His Generals*, 1938]; *Primeri političke sociologije: Engleska, Francuska, Nemačka: 1815–1914* [*Some Examples of Political Sociology: England, France, Germany: 1815–1914*, 1940]; *O totalitarizmu* [*On Totalitarianism*, 1952]; *Apis* [*Apis*,⁶ 1962–1963]; *Sabrana dela I-XII* [*Collected Works I-XII*, 1990–1991]; *Kulturni obrazac* [*A Pattern of Culture*, 2009]; *O suverenosti: uvodno predavanje iz državnog prava* [*On Sovereignty: An Introductory Lecture on Constitutional Law*, 1996]; *O državi: osnovi jedne pravne teorije* [*On the State: The Foundations of a Law Theory*, 2011]; *Gledston* [*Gladstone*, 2012]; *O istorijskoj ličnosti generala Mihailovića* [*On General Mihailovich as a Historic Figure*, 2012]; *Jedan prilog za proučavanje srpskog nacionalnog karaktera* [*A Contribution to the Research in the Serbian National Character*, 2017]; *Istorija, politika, demokratija* [*History, Politics, Democracy*, 2018]. Books of essays: *Iz naše istorije i književnosti* [*From the Serbian History and Literature*, 1931]; *Moji savremenici* [*My Contemporaries*, 1962]; *Zapisi o problemima i ljudima: 1941–1944* [*Notes on Problems and People: 1941–1944*, 1976]; *Slobodan Jovanović u emigraciji: razgovori i zapisi* [*Slobodan Jovanović in Exile: Talks and Notes*, 1993]; *Ogledi* [*Essays*, 2019].

SVETOZAR KOLJEVIĆ (Banja Luka, BiH, 1930 – Novi Sad, Serbia, 2016). Anglist, written studies, essays, criticism and literature reviews, trans-

⁶ Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijević (1876–1916), known as **Apis**, was one of the conspirators who assassinated King Aleksandar Obrenović and Queen Draga in the May Overthrow (1903) and leader of the secret Black Hand group. Confronting the wartime Government and Regent Aleksandar I Karađorđević, he underwent the so-called Salonika Trial and was executed in Thessaloniki, Greece, following the verdict of treason. – *Translator's note*.

lated from English, academician. Published books: *Trijumf inteligencije* [*Triumph of Intelligence*, 1963]; *Humor i mit* [*Humor and myth*, 1968]; *Naš junački ep* [*Our heroine epic*, 1974]; *Putevi reči* [*Ways to say*, 1978]; *The Epic in the Making*, 1980; *Pripovetke Ive Andrića* [*Ivo Andrić's Novels*, 1983]; *Engleska književnost 3* [*English Literature 3* (group of authors), 1984]; *Viđenja i snoviđenja* [*Visions and Dreams*, 1986]; *Hirovi romana* [*A novel of the novel*, 1988]; *Pripovetka 1945–1980* [*The Novel, 1945–1980*, 1991]; *Po belom svetu-zapisi i sećanja* [*In the White World – Records and Memories*, 1997]; *Postanje epa* [*Becoming an epic*, 1998]; *Englesko-srpski rečnik* [*English-Serbian Dictionary* (co-author I. Đurić Paunović), 1999]; *Engleski pesnici dvadesetog veka (1914–1980) – od Vilfreda Ovena do Filipa Larkina* [*English poets of the twentieth century (1914–1980) – from Wilfred Owen to Philip Larkin*, 2002]; *Engleski romansijeri dvadesetog veka (1914–1960) – od Džejsma Džojlsa do Vilijama Goldinga* [*English Romanesque Twentieth Century (1914–1960) – from James Joyce to William Golding*, 2003]; *Vječna zublja – odjeci usmene u pisanoj književnosti* [*Eternal Eyes – Echoes of Oral in Written Literature*, 2005]; *Vavilonski izazovi – o susretima različitih kultura u književnosti* [*Babylonian Challenges – Encounters of Different Cultures in Literature*, 2007]; *Odjeci reči* [*Echoes of the Word*, 2009]; *Između zavičaja i tudine – susreti različitih kultura u srpskoj književnosti* [*Between the homeland and the alien – encounters of different cultures in Serbian literature*, 2015]; *Džozef Konrad: čovek i umetnik* [*Joseph Konrad: Man and Artist*, 2016].

SLOBODAN KOSTIĆ (Kriva Reka near Novo Brdo, 1952–Belgrade, 2012) was a Serbian author, poet and essayist, graduate from the Faculty of Philosophy in Priština, Department of Yugoslav Literature. After the period of journalism/reporting for Priština's daily newspaper *Jedinstvo* (1975–1979), he was elected assistant lecturer (1979) for the subject Medieval Literature at the Department of Literature, Faculty of Philosophy in Priština, where he defended his doctoral dissertation about the literary work of Rade Drainac. He remained at the university there, holding professorship in the subject Theory of Literature as long as he lived. For a while (1990–1996), he was Director of the Provincial National and University Library in Priština and an M.P. in the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. Kostić wrote poetry and works in the fields of literary history and theory. Books of poetry: *Obračun s anđelom* [*A Showdown with the Angel*, 1974]; *Metak na poslužavniku* [*A Bullet on the Tray*, 1977]; *Čitanje mape* [*Reading of a Map*, 1983]; *Žilišta* [*Vein-Sites*, 1987]; *Izabrane pesme* [*Selected Poems*, 1993]; *Pokajničke pesme* [*Poems of Repentance*, 2000]. Fiction: *Putnik kroz sećanja i svetinje* [*Travelling through Memories and Holy Places*, 2006]; *Put: sazrcanja smirenog srca* [*The Journey: Contemplations of a Tranquil Heart*, 2011]. Theoretical works: *Novija srpska poezija na Kosovu i Metohiji* [*Recent Serbian Poetry in Kosovo and Metohija*, 1981]; *Stvaranje i tumačenje* [*Creation and Interpretation*, 1990]; *Budni snevač*

Rade Drainac [Rade Drainac, a Wakeful Dreamer, 1992]; *Mali pravoslavni pojmovnik* [A Concise Glossary of Orthodoxy, 1994]; *Pravoslavno duhovno pesništvo* [The Orthodox Spiritual Poetry, 2000]; *Stvaranje i tvorevina* [Creative Act and the Achievement, 2001].

MILOŠ KOVAČEVIĆ (b. Presjedovac near Ulog in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1953) conducts research in the fields of general linguistics, syntax, semantics, and the stylistics of the contemporary Serbian language. He has produced about 300 scholarly studies and articles, as well as several textbooks for Serbian as a school subject. Books published: *Uzročno semantičko polje* [The Causative Semantic Field, 1988]; *Gramatika i stilistika stilskih figura* [Grammar and Stylistics in Figures of Speech, 1991]; *Kroz sintagme i rečenice* [Through Syntagmas and Sentences, 1992]; *Suštastveno i mimogredno u lingvistici* [The Essential and the Subsidiary in Linguistics, 1996]; *U odbranu jezika srpskoga* [In Defence of the Serbian Language, 1997]; *Sintaksa složene rečenice u srpskom jeziku* [The Syntax of Composite Sentence in the Serbian Language, 1998]; *Stilske figure i književni tekst* [Figures of Speech and Literary Text, 1998]; *U odbranu jezika srpskoga – i dalje* [In Defence of the Serbian Language – and More, 1999]; *Predavanja prof. dr Miloša Kovačevića održana u Londonu 2000. i 2001. g. povodom slave Fonda (Laza Kostić) na dan Sveta Tri Jerarha* [Lectures by Professor Miloš Kovačević Ph. D. delivered in London in the years 2000 and 2001 on the occasion of the Feast of the Three Great Hierarchs, side-by-side texts in Serbian and English, 2001]; *Sintaksička negacija u srpskome jeziku* [Syntactical Negation in the Serbian Language, 2002]; *Srpski jezik i srpski jezici* [The Serbian Language and Serbian Tongues, 2003]; *Gramatičke i stilističke teme* [Grammatical and Stylistic Topics, 2003]; *Srpski pisci o srpskom jeziku* [Serbian Writers on the Serbian Language, 2005]; *Ogledi o sintaksičkoj negaciji* [Essays on Syntactical Negation, 2004]; *Protiv neistina o srpskom jeziku* [Confronting the Falsehoods about the Serbian Language, 2005]; *Spisi o stilu i jeziku* [Writings about Style and Language, 2006]; *Srbističke teme* [Some Topics of the Serbian Studies, 2007]; *Ogledi iz srpske sintakse* [Essays on the Serbian Syntax, 2009]; *Gramatička pitanja srpskoga jezika* [Some Grammatical Issues of the Serbian Language, 2011]; *Srpski jezik u vrtlogu politike* [The Serbian Language in the Maelstrom of Politics, co-authored with Mihailo Šćepanović, 2011]; *Stilska značenja i zračenja* [The Style-Related Sense and Release, 2011]; *Lingvostilistika književnog teksta* [The Linguo-Stylistics of a Literary Text, 2012]; *Uzročno semantičko polje* [The Causative Semantic Field, 2012]; *U odbranu srpske ćirilice: hrestomatija* [In Defence of the Serbian Cyrillic Alphabet: A Chrestomathy, 2013]; *Lingvistika kao srbistika* [Linguistics as Serbian Studies, 2013]; *Srpski pisci u ozračju stilistike* [Serbian Authors in the Light of Stylistics, 2013]; *Srpski jezik između lingvistike i politike* [The Serbian Language Between Linguistics and Politics, 2015]; *Stil i jezik srpskih pisaca* [The Style and the Language of Serbian Authors, 2015];

O rečenici i njenim članovima [About Sentence and Its 'Members', 2015]; *Srpski jezik pod lupom nauke* [The Serbian Language under the Magnifying Glass of Science, 2017]; *Bitne srbističke napomene* [Some Essential Notations on Serbian Studies, 2018]; *Borba za ćirilicu i srpski jezik* [The Struggle for the Cyrillic Alphabet and the Serbian Language, 2018]; *Stilske dominante srpskih proznih pisaca* [Dominant Traits in the Style of Serbian Fiction Writers, 2019].

ALEKSANDAR B. LAKOVIĆ (b. Peć, Kosovo and Metohia, Serbia, 1955) is an author of poetry, essays, studies and literary reviews. Books of poems: *Noći* [Nights, 1992]; *Zaseda* [Ambush, 1994]; *Povratak u Hilandar* [Chilandari Revisited, 1996]; *Drvo slepog gavrana* [The Blind Raven's Tree, 1997]; *Dok nam krov prokišnja* [While Our Roof Is Leaking, 1999]; *Ko da nam vrati lica usput izgubljena* [Who Can Return to Us the Faces Lost along Our Way, selected verse, 2004]; *Nećeš u pesmu* [You Have No Place in Verse, 2011]; *Silazak anđela – pokosovski ciklus* [The Angels' Descent: Post-Kosovo Cycle, 2015]; *Ko da nam vrati lica usput izgubljena* [Who Can Return to Us the Faces Lost along Our Way, selected and new verse, 2015]; *Glasovi neba pod zemljom* [The Underground Voices of the Heaven, 2016]. Studies: *Od totema do srodnika: mitološki svet Slovena u srpskoj književnosti* [From the Totem to the Kins: The Mythological World of the Slavs in the Serbian Literature, 2000]; *Hilandarski putopisi* [Chilandari Travelogues, 2002]; *Tokovi van tokova – autentični pesnički postupci u savremenoj srpskoj poeziji* [Streams Beyond Streams: The Authentic Poetic Proceeds in the Contemporary Serbian Poetry, 2004]; *Jezikotvorci – gongorizam u srpskoj poeziji* [Language-Makers: Gongorism in the Serbian Poetry, 2006]; *Dnevnik reči – eseji i prikazi srpske pesničke produkcije 2006–2007* [A Word Diary: Essays and Reviews on the Serbian Poets' Output 2006–2007, 2008]; *Dnevnik glasova – eseji i prikazi srpske pesničke produkcije 2008–2009* [A Sound Diary: Essays and Reviews on the Serbian Poets' Output 2008–2009, 2011]; *Djordje Marković Koder – jezik i mit* [Djordje Marković Koder: Language and Myth, 2013]; *Dnevnik stihova – prikazi i eseji srpske pesničke produkcije 2010–2012* [A Verse Diary: Reviews and Essays on the Serbian Poets' Output 2010–2012, 2014]; *Dnevnik pesama – prikazi i eseji srpske pesničke produkcije 2013–2015* [A Diary of Poems: Reviews and Essays on the Serbian Poets' Output 2013–2015, 2016]; *Kod kuće nismo zaključavali: roman-album* [We Didn't Lock Our House Door: An Album-Novel, 2017]; *Reči u senci – ogledi o prećutoj srpskoj poeziji završne trećine dvadesetog i početka dvadesetprvog veka* [Shadow Words – Tales of Silent Serbian Poetry in the Final Third of the Twentieth and Early Twentieth Centuries, 2018].

MILO LOMPAR (b. Belgrade, 1962) is a historian and theoretician of literature, and author of studies. Books published: *O završetku romana* (Smisao

završetka u romanu „Druga knjiga Seoba“ Miloša Crnjanskog) [*On the Ending in a Novel (The Meaning of the Ending in the Novel “The Second Book of Migrations” by Miloš Crnjanski*), 1995]; *Moderna vremena u prozi Dragiše Vasića* [*Modern Times in the Prose of Dragiša Vasić*, 1996]; *Njegoš i moderna* [*Njegoš and Modernism*, 1998]; *Crnjanski i Mefistofel (O skrivenoj figuri “Romana o Londonu”)* [*Crnjanski and Mephistopheles (About the Doppelgänger in “The Novel about London”*), 2000]; *Apolonovi putokazi – eseji o Crnjanskom* [*Appollo’s Guideposts: Essays on Crnjanski*, 2004]; *Moralistički fragmenti* [*Moralist Fragments*, 2007]; *Negde na granici filozofije i literature – o književnoj hermeneutici Nikole Miloševića* [*Somewhere on the Border between Philosophy and Literature: About the Literary Hermeneutics of Nikola Milošević*, 2009]; *Njegoševo pesništvo* [*The Poetry of Njegoš*, 2010]; *O tragičkom pesniku* [*About a Tragic Poet*, 2010]; *Duh samoporicajanja – prilog kritici srpske kulturne politike* [*The Spirit of Self-Denial: A Contribution to the Critique of the Serbian Cultural Policy*, 2011]; *Povratak srpskom stanovništvu?* [*Regaining the Serbian Populace?*, interviews, 2013]; *Pohvala nesavremenosti* [*A Eulogy to Obsolescence*, 2016]; *Polihistorska istraživanja* [*Polyhistoric Inquiries*, 2016]; *Sloboda i istina* [*Freedom and Truth*, interviews, 2018]; *Crnjanski, biografija jednog osećanja* [*Crnjanski – Biography of a Sentiment*, 2018]; *Njegoš: biografija njegovog pesništva* [*Njegosh: a biography of his poetry*, 2019].

NENAD LJUBINKOVIĆ (b. Belgrade, 1940) completed his undergraduate, master’s and doctoral studies at Belgrade’s Faculty of Philology. As a historian of literature and sociologist, he is one of the best connoisseurs of the Serbian folk literature and folklore. As a full professor, he teaches at the Faculty of Music, University of Arts in Belgrade. Ljubinković has authored hundreds of treatises, studies, articles and reviews, and also edited several anthologies of oral folk art. Monographs published: *Usmena književnost jugoslovenskih naroda* [*The Oral Literature of Yugoslavia’s Peoples*, 1978, 1995]; *Pjevanija crnogorska i hercegovačka Sime Milutinovića Sarajlije* [*The Collection of Epic Poetry from Montenegro and Herzegovina by Sima Milutinović Sarajlija*, 2000]; *Traganja i odgovori – studije iz književnosti i folkloru* [*Quests and Answers: Studies in Literature and Folklore (I)*, 2010]; *Prvi srpski ustanak – od istorije do „narodne istorije“ i njene usmene mitizacije* [*The First Serbian Uprising: From History to ‘Folk History’ and Its Oral Mythization*, co-authored with Mirjana Drndarski, 2012]; *Naši daleki preci: etnomitološke studije – traganja i promišljanja* [*Our Remote Ancestors: Ethno-mythological Studies – Quests and Considerations*, 2014]; *Od Kosovske bitke do kosovske legende* [*From the Battle of Kosovo to the Legend about Kosovo*, 2018].

LJILJANA PEŠIKAN LJUŠTANOVIĆ (b. Feketić near Vrbas, 1954) writes studies, essays and scholarly papers dealing with folk literature, the

history of literature, drama and the theatre. Books published: *Poslovi i dani srpske pesničke tradicije* [The Tasks and Days of the Serbian Poets' Tradition, co-authored with Z. Karanović, 1994]; *Zmaj Despot Vuk – mit, istorija, pesma* [Zmaj Despot Vuk.⁷ Myth, History, Poem, 2002]; *Stanaja selo zapali – ogledi o usmenoj poeziji* [Stanaja Set the Village to Fire: Essays on Oral Poetry, 2007]; *Kad je bila kneževa večera? – usmena književnost i tradicionalna kultura u srpskoj drami 20. veka* [When Did the Prince's Supper Take Place? Oral Literature and Traditional Culture in the Serbian 20th-Century Drama, 2009]; *Usmeno u pisanom* [The Oral within the Written, 2009]; *Gospodi Alisinoj desnoj nozi – ogledi o književnosti za decu* [To Mrs. Right Leg of Alice: Essays on Children's Literature, 2012]; *Bez očiju kano i s očima – narodne pesme slepih žena* [Unsighted Just Like the Sighted Ones: Folk Poems by Blind Women, by a group of authors, 2014]; *Zatočnik pete sile – fantastična proza Zorana Živkovića* [The Herald of the Fifth Power: The Fantastic Fiction of Zoran Živković, 2016]; *Glavit junak i ostala gospoda – analiza narodnih pesama* [The Main Character and Other Noblemen, by a group of authors, 2017]. Ljiljana Pešikan Ljuštanović has edited a number of books.

VIOLETA MITROVIĆ (b. Novi Sad, 1989) completed her undergraduate and master's studies in the Serbian literature at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad. She currently pursues doctoral studies in the same field, and also writes studies, essays and literary reviews. In addition, she translates from English. Book of essays and reviews: *Hermeneutička pristaništa* [Hermeneutic Wharfages, 2018].

IVAN NEGRİŠORAC (b. Trstenik, Serbia, 1956). Author of poetry, fiction, plays and literary reviews. From 2005 to 2012, he was the Editor-in-Chief of *Letopis Matice srpske*; in 2012, elected President of the Matica srpska. Books of poetry: *Trula jabuka* [Rotting Apple, 1981]; *Rakljar. Želudac* [Dowser. Stomach, 1983]; *Zemljopis* [Soil-Survey, 1986]; *Abrakadabra* [Abracadabra, 1990]; *Toplo, hladno* [Hot, Cold, 1990]; *Hop* [Hop-Skipping, 1993]; *Veznici* [Conjunctions, 1995]; *Prilozi* [Adverbs/Contributions, 2002]; *Potajnik* [The Mole, 2007]; *Svetilnik* [The Torchbearer, 2010]; *Kamena čtenija* [Petrographic Readings, 2013]; *Čtenija* [Readings, selected verse, 2015]; *Matični mleč* [Bee Bread, 2016]; *Izložba oblaka (izbor i nove)* [Cloud Exhibition (Choice and New), 2017]; *Ogledala Oka Nedremana* [Mirrors of the Eye of Sleepless, 2019]. Novel: *Andjeli umiru* [Angels Are Dying, 1998]. Plays: *Fredi umire* [Freddy's Dying, 1987]; *Kuc-kuc* [Knock-Knock, 1989]; *Istraga je u toku, zar ne?* [The Investigation's

⁷ **Zmaj Despot Vuk** (Vuk the Dragon-Despot) is one of the habitual forms of reference to the historic and literary figure of Vuk Grgurević Branković (c. 1440–1485), titular Despot of Serbia who fought for Hungary against the Ottomans and became famed for his valour and heroism. Another of his names found in folk tradition is *Zmaj Ognjeni Vuk* (Vuk the Fiery Dragon). – Translator's note.

Under Way, Isn't It?, 2000]; *Vidiš li svíce na nebu* [*Do You See the Fireflies in the Sky?*, 2006]. Studies: *Legitimacija za beskućnike. Srpska neoavangardna poezija – poetički identitet i razlike* [*ID for the Homeless. Serbian Neo-Avant-Garde Poetry: Poetic Identity and Differences*, 1996]; *Lirska aura Jovana Dučića* [*The Lyrical Aura of Jovan Dučić*, 2009]; *Istraga predaka – iskušenja kolektivnog i individualnog opstanka* [*Ancestral Investigation – The Temptations of Collective and Individual Survival*, 2018]. Negrišorac chairs the Editorial Board of *Srpska Enciklopedija* (*A Serbian Encyclopedia*) Book 1, Vols. 1-2 (2010-11); Book 2 (2013); Book 3, Vol.1 (2018).

DANILO NIKOLIĆ (Split, Croatia 1926–Belgrade, 2016) wrote fiction. Books of short stories: *Male poruke* [*Small Messages*, 1957]; *Povratak u Metohiju* [*Metohija Revisited*, 1973]; *Spisak grešaka* [*A List of Mistakes*, 1976]; *Spisak zasluga* [*A List of Credits*, 1981]; *Provetravanje vladara* [*Some Fresh Air for the Ruler*, 1984]; *Ulazak u svet* [*Entering the World*, 1997]; *Hronika metohijske varoši Peć u deset slika* [*A Chronicle of Metohija's Town of Peć in Ten Frames*, selected stories, 2006]; *Priče iz mojih romana* [*The Stories from My Novels*, 2008]; *Laži, lažo, da se veselimo* [*Say Some Lies, O Liar, to Cheer Us Up*, 2009]; *Spisak zvanica* [*A List of Invitees*, 2010]; *Jedna uporna uspomena* [*A Haunting Recollection*, 2014]. Books of children's tales: *Put za prijatelje* [*The Road for Friends*, 1966]; *Oni su voleli srne* [*They Were Fond of Does*, 1979]; *Neko sat, neko budilnik* [*Clock to One, Alarm to the Other*, 1979]; *Divljak u mračnoj šumi* [*A Savage in the Dark Wood*, 2001]; *Najbolji deda na svetu* [*The Best Granddad in the World*, 2004]. Novels: *Vlasnici bivše sreće* [*The Owners of the Onetime Joy*, 1989]; *Kraljica zabave* [*The Party Queen*, 1995]; *Fajront u Grgetegu* [*Closing Time at Grgeteg*, 1998]; *Foto-keramička gospodina Cebalovića* [*Ceramic Photo of Mr. Cebalović*, 2000]; *Jesenja svila* [*Autumn Silk*, 2001]; *Melihat iz Glog* [*Melihat from Glog*, 2005]; *Korektor* [*Proofreader*, 2009]; *Spisak budućih pokojnika* [*A List of the Deceased-to-Be*, 2012]. Memoir-form prose: *Velika prazna reka* [*The Large Empty River*, 2003]; *Prah za pozlatu* [*Gold Powder*, 2005]; *Crta za sabiranje* [*Underlining the Sum-Up*, 2006]; *Dani bez Stevana: zapisi* [*The Days of Stevan's Absence: Notations*, 2016].

MIHAJLO PANTIĆ (b. Belgrade, Serbia, 1957) is an author of short stories, literary reviews, essays and studies. Books of short stories: *Hronika sobe* [*The Chronicle of a Room*, 1984]; *Vonder u Berlinu* [*Wonder in Berlin*, 1987]; *Pesnici, pisci & ostala menažerija* [*Poets, Writers & the Rest of the Menagerie*, 1992]; *Ne mogu da se setim jedne rečenice* [*I Can't Remember One Sentence*, 1993]; *Novobeogradske priče* [*New Belgrade Stories*, 1994]; *Sedmi dan košave* [*The Seventh Day of the Koshava Wind*, 1999]; *Jutro posle* [*The Morning After*, 2001]; *Ako je to ljubav* [*If That Is Love*, 2003]; *Najlepše priče Mihajla Pantića* [*The Most Appealing Stories by Mihajlo Pantić*, 2004];

Žena u muškim cipelama – the Best of [Woman in Men's Shoes – the Best of, selected short stories, 2006]; *Prvih deset godina* [The First Ten Years, 2006]; *Ovoga puta o bolu* [This Time about Pain, 2007]; *Sve priče Mihajla Pantića I-IV* [All Stories by Mihajlo Pantić I-IV, 2007]; *Priče na putu* [Stories on the Road, 2010]; *Hodanje po oblacima* [Walking across the Clouds, 2013]; *Ako je to ljubav* [If That Is Love, 2014]; *Vonder u Berlinu* [Wonder in Berlin, 2015]; *Sedmi dan košave* [The Seventh Day of the Koshava Wind, 2015]; *Ovoga puta o bolu* [This Time about Pain, 2016]; *Novobeogradske priče* [New Belgrade Stories, 2016]; *Kada me ugleda ono što tražim* [When I'm Spotted by What I'm Looking For, 2017]. Studies, reviews, essays, criticism, travelogues: *Iskušenja sažetosti* [The Temptations of Conciseness, 1984]; *Aleksandrijski sindrom 1–4* [Alexandrian Syndrome 1–4, 1987, 1994, 1999, 2003]; *Protiv sistematičnosti* [Opposing Systematicness, 1988]; *Šum Vavilona* [Babylon Noise, co-authored with V. Pavković, 1988]; *Deset pesama, deset razgovora* [Ten Poems, Ten Conversations, co-authored with S. Zubanović, 1992]; *Novi prilozi za savremenu srpsku poeziju* [New Contributions to the Contemporary Serbian Poetry, 1994]; *Puzzle*, 1995; *Šta čitam i šta mi se događa* [What I Read and What Happens to Me, 1998]; *Kiš*, 1998; *Modernističko pripovedanje* [Modernist Storytelling, 1999]; *Tortura teksta (Puzzle II)* [Tortured by Text (Puzzle II), 2000]; *Ogledi o svakodnevicu (Puzzle III)* [Essays on the Quotidian (Puzzle III), 2001]; *Svet iza sveta* [A World Behind the World, 2002]; *Kapetan sobne plovidbe (Puzzle IV)* [Room-Based Shipmaster (Puzzle IV), 2003]; *Svakodnevnik čitanja* [Logbook of Reading, 2004]; *Život je upravo u toku (Puzzle II)* [Life Is Just Afoot (Puzzle V), 2005]; *Pisci govore* [Writers Talking, 2007]; *Drugi svet iza sveta* [Another World Behind the World, 2009]; *Neizgubljeno vreme* [The Unwasted Time, 2009]; *Slankamen (Puzzle VI)*, 2009; *Dnevnik jednog uživaoca čitanja* [Diary of a Reading Addict, 2009]; *A Short History of Serbian Literature* (by a group of authors), 2011; *Biti rokenrol* [Being Rock-'n'-Roll, co-authored with P. Popović, 2011]; *Stan bez adrese (Puzzle VII)* [An Apartment with No Address (Puzzle VII), 2014]; *Od stiha do stiha – svet iza sveta 3* [From One Verse Line to Another: A World Behind the World 3, 2014]; *Priče od vode – sve ribe Srbije* [Stories Derived from Water: All of Serbia's Fish, co-authored with M. Tucović, 2014]; *Osnovi srpskog pripovedanja* [The Basics of Serbian Storytelling, 2015]; *Šta čitam i šta mi se događa* [What I Read and What Happens to Me, 2016]; *Solvitur scribendo: osmi puzzle* [Solvitur scribendo (Puzzle VIII), 2019]; *Šta čitam i šta mi se događa: (lični azbučnik pisaca). 5, Čitanje, drugi život* [What I Read and What Happens to Me: (personal alphabet of writers). 5, Reading, Another Life, 2019]. Pantić has edited numerous books, anthologies and proceedings.

KATARINA PANTOVIĆ (b. Belgrade, 1994) got her B.A. and M. A. degrees at the Department of Comparative Literature, Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad where she currently (2019-20) attends the first year of doctoral

studies. She writes and publishes scholarly papers, literary reviews and poetry in specialized and literary periodicals and proceedings. In addition, she pursues translation from English and German, painting art, and artistic photography. Book of poetry: *Unutrašnje nevreme* [*An Inner Storm*, 2019].

MARKO PAOVICA (b. Cibrijan near Trebinje in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1950) is an author of literary reviews and essays about the contemporary Serbian literature. Books published: *Rasponi prozne reči – o proznim knjigama savremenih srpskih pisaca* [*The Spans of Prose Word: On the Books of Fiction by Contemporary Serbian Writers*, 2005]; *Aretejev luk* [*Areteus' Bow*, 2009]; *Orfej na stolu – ogledi o savremenim srpskim pesnicima* [*Orpheus on the Table: Essays on Contemporary Serbian Poets*, 2011]; *Metakritički izleti* [*Metacritical Excursions*, 2017].

JOVAN POPOV (b. Novi Sad, 1962) is a historian and theoretician of literature, full professor of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. He writes scholarly studies, essays and literary critique; besides, he is a translator from the French language. Books published: *Oslobođeni čitalac. Ogledi o teoriji i praksi čitanja* [*The Reader Unbound. Essays on the Theory and Practice of Reading*, 1993]; *Klasicistička poetika romana* [*The Classicist Poetics of the Novel*, 2001]; *Čitanja neizvesnosti. Ogledi iz komparatistike* [*Readings of Uncertainty. Essays in Comparative Studies*, 2006]; *Dvoboj kao književni motiv. Tematološka studija* [*Duel as a Motif in Literature. A Thematological Study*, 2012]. Popov is one of the authors of *Pregledni rečnik komparatističke terminologije u književnosti i kulturi* [*An Easy-to-Survey Glossary of the Comparativist Terminology in Literature and Culture*, 2011].

ŽIVOJIN RAKOČEVIĆ (b. Sela, Morača Valley, Montenegro) writes verse, studies and literary reviews, in addition to pursuing journalism. Books of poetry: *Bogu dušu* [*On One's Last Legs*, 1993]; *Žitije kamena* [*The Hagiography of a Stone*, 1995]; *Čekajući metastazu* [*Waiting for Metastasis*, 1996]; *Povratak u katakombe* [*Back to the Catacombs*, 1998]; *Glad* [*Starvation*, 2010]. Monograph: *Pronađeno pozorište* [*Theatre Discovered*, 2010]. Editor of the book *Umetnost života – razgovori na Kosovu i Metohiji s početka 21. veka* [*The Art of Living: Interviews in Kosovo and Metohija at the Beginning of the 21st Century*, 2014].

SLOBODAN RELJIĆ (b. Teslić, Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1954) is a journalist who for a long time held the post of the Editor-in-Chief of the weekly *NIN* (*Nedeljne informativne novine*/'Weekly News Magazine'). He graduated from the Department of Journalism, Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade; at the Faculty of Philosophy there he was conferred the Ph. D. (title of dissertation: "The Change in the Character of Media in Contemporary Capitalism:

Causes, Protagonists, Consequences”). Books published: *Odumiranje slobodnih medija* [*Dying Out of the Free Media*, 2011]; *Kriza medija i mediji krize* [*The Crisis of the Media and the Media of the Crisis*, 2013]; *Mediji i Treći svetski rat – smatrajte se mobilisanim* [*The Media and the Third World War: You’d Better See Yourself as Mobilised*, 2016]; *Bukvar medijske pismenosti: kako proživeti život u doba “ekranoida”* [*A Primer for Media Literacy: How to Cope with Life in the Age of ‘Screenoids’*, 2018].

DORĐO SLADOJE (b. Klinja near Ulog, Herzegovina, BiH) is a distinguished Serbian poet. Books of verse: *Dnevnik nesanice* [*A Diary of Insomnia*, 1976]; *Veliki post* [*The Great Fast*, 1984]; *Svakodnevni utornik* [*The Everyday Tuesday*, 1989]; *Trepetnik* [*The Trembler*, 1992]; *Plač Svetog Save* [*Saint Sava’s Lament*, 1995]; *Dani lijevljani* [*Molten Days*, selected verse, 1996]; *Petožarni mučenici* [*The Five Companion-Martyrs*, 1998]; *Daleko je Hilandar* [*Far-Away is Chilandari*, 2000]; *Ogledalce srpsko* [*The Serbian Mirror on the Wall*, 2003]; *Duša sa sedam kora* [*The Soul with Seven Crusts*, selected verse, 2003]; *Nemoj da me zazmajavaš – pesme za sadašnju i bivšu decu* [*Don’t Fob Me Off with Zmaj: Poems for the Kids of Today and Yesterday*, 2004]; *Mala vaskrsenja* [*Minor Resurrections*, 2006]; *Pogled u avliju – izbor i nove pesme* [*A Look into the Yard*, selected and new verse, 2006]; *Manastirski baštovan* [*The Monastic Gardener*, 2008]; *Gorska služba – izabrane pesme o zavičaju* [*Mountain Service: Selected Poems on My Birthplace*, 2010]; *Zemlja i reči* [*Soil and Words*, selected verse, 2011]; *Zlatne olupine* [*Golden Wrecks*, 2012]; *Silazak u samoću* [*Descent into Solitude*, 2015]; *Pevač u magli* [*The Singer in the Mist*, 2017]; *Odlaganje odlaska (izabrane i nove pesme)* [*Postponement of departure (selected and new songs)*, 2019]; *Zanatski dom* [*Craftsman home*, 2019].

BOJANA STOJANOVIĆ PANTOVIĆ (b. Belgrade, 1960) lectures at the Department of Comparative Literature of Novi Sad’s Faculty of Philosophy. She writes literary-theoretical, theoretical and comparative studies, critique, poetry and lyrical prose; besides, she practices translation work from the Slovenian and English languages. Scholarly works published: *Poetika Mirana Jarca* [*The Poetics of Miran Jarec*, 1987]; *Linija dodira* [*The Line of Contact*, 1995]; *Nasleđe sumatraizma – poetičke figure u srpskom pesništvu devedesetih* [*The Heritage of Sumatraism: Figures of Speech in the Serbian Poetry of the 1990’s*, 1998]; *Srpski ekspresionizam* [*Serbian Expressionism*, 1999]; *Kritička pisma* [*Letters of Criticism*, 2002]; *Morfologija ekspresionističke proze* [*The Morphology of Expressionist Fiction*, 2003]; *Raskršća metafore* [*The Junctures of the Metaphor*, 2004]; *Pobuna protiv središta – novi prilozi o modernoj srpskoj književnosti* [*Revolt against the Centre: New Contributions about Modern Serbian Literature*, 2006]; *Oštar ugao* [*Acute Angle*, 2008]; *Rasponi modernizma – uporedna čitanja srpske književnosti* [*The Spans of*

Modernism: Comparative Readings of the Serbian Literature, 2011]; *Pregledni rečnik komparativističke terminologije u književnosti i kulturi* [An Easy-to-Survey Glossary of the Comparativist Terminology in Literature and Culture, co-authored and edited by M. Radović and V. Gvozden, 2011]; *Pesma u prozi ili prozaida* [The Prose Poem, or the Prosaids, 2012]; *Čist oblik ekstaze: studije i eseji o srpskom pesništvu* [A Pure Form of Ecstasy: Studies and Essays on Serbian Poetry, 2019]. Anthologies: *Srpske prozaide – antologija pesama u prozi* [Serbian Prosaids: An Anthology of Prose Poems, 2001]; *Nebolomstvo – panorama srpskog pesništva kraja XX veka* [Breaking through the Sky: A Panoramic View of the Serbian Poetry at the End of the 20th Century, 2006]. Verse and lyrical prose: *Beskrajna* [The Infinite, 2005]; *Zaručnici vatre* [Betrothed to Fire, 2008]; *Isijavanje* [Emanation, 2009]; *Lekcije o smrti* [Lessons on Death, 2013]; *U obroču* [Encircled, 2017]. B. Stojanović Pantović has edited a number of books by Serbian writers.

BOGOLJUB ŠIJAKOVIĆ (b. Nikšić, Montenegro, 1955) is a philosopher, Orthodox theologian, politician, university professor. His areas of study/work include ancient philosophy, Orthodox theology, translation, editing. Books: *Mythos, physis, psyche – ogledanje u pred Sokratovskoj 'ontologiji' i 'psihologiji'*, [Mythos, Physis, Psyche: Tackling Pre-Socratic 'Ontology' and 'Psychology', 1991]; *Zoon Politikon: Primjeri iz lične legitimacije* [Zoon Politikon: Examples from an ID 'Card', 1994]; *Hermesova krila* [Hermes' Wings, 1994]; *Amicus Hermes – Aufsätze zur Hermeneutik der griechischen Philosophie*, 1996; *Istorija, odgovornost, svetost* [History, Responsibility, Holiness, 1997]; *Kritika balkanističkog diskursa* [A Critique of the Balkanistic Discourse, 2000]; *Between God and Man – Essays in Greek and Christian Thought*, 2002; *Pred licem drugog – fuga u ogledima* [Facing the Other: A Fugue in Essays, 2002]; *A Critique of Balkanistic Discourse – Contribution to the Phenomenology of Balkan "Otherness"*, 2004; *Ogledanje u kontekstu – o znanju i vjeri, predanju i identitetu, crkvi i državi* [Tackling the Context: About Knowledge and Faith, Tradition and Identity, the Church and the State, 2009]; *La critique du discours balkanistique – Contribution à la phénoménologie de "l'altérité" des Balkans*, 2010; *Univerzitet i srpska teologija – istorijski i prosvetni kontekst osnivanja Pravoslavnog teološkog fakulteta u Beogradu: (istraživanja, dokumentacija, bibliografija)* [The University and Serbian Theology – The Historical and Educational Context of Instituting the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Belgrade: (Research, Documentation, Bibliography), co-authored with A. Raković, 2010]; *Briga za žrtvu – pamćenje imena i spomen srpske žrtve* [Care for the Victim: Remembering the Name and Commemorating the Serbian Sacrifice, 2011]; *Bibliografija časopisa "Luča" (1984–2005)* [Bibliography of the Review Luča/The Torch (1984–2005), 2011]; *Mit i filozofija – ontološki potencijal mita i početak helenske filozofije • Teorija mita i helensko mitotvorstvo – bibliografija* [Myth and Philosophy – The

Ontological Potential of Myth and the Beginning of the Hellenic Philosophy • *The Theory of Myth and Hellenic Myth-Making – Bibliography*, 2012]; *Istorija – nasilje – teorija: izabrani „istoriosofski” eseji* [History – Violence – Theory: Selected ‘Historiosophical’ Essays, 2012]; *O patnji i pamćenju: izabrani „antropološki” eseji* [On Suffering and Memory: Selected ‘Anthropological’ Essays, 2012]; *The Presence of Transcendence: Essays on Facing the Other through Holiness, History, and Text*, 2013; *Prisutnost transcendencije: helenstvo, hrišćanstvo, filosofija istorije* [The Presence of Transcendence: Hellenism, Christianity, Philosophy of History, 2013]; *The University and Serbian Theology – The Historical and Educational Context of the Establishment of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Belgrade (Research, Documentation, Bibliography)*, co-authored with A. Raković, 2014; *Biobibliografije istraživača na projektu Srpska teologija u dvadesetom veku* [Bio-Bibliographies of the Researchers in the Project “Serbian Theology in the Twentieth Century”, 2015]; *Veliki rat, vidovdanska etika, pamćenje – o istoriji ideja i Spomenu Žrtve* [The Great War, the Vidovdan Ethics, Remembrance: On the History of Ideas and Commemoration of the Victim, 2015]; *Otpor zaboravu: nekoliko (p)ogleda* [Resisting Oblivion: Several Views/Essays, 2016]; *Crkva, pravo, identitet* [Church, law, identity, 2019]; *Svetosavlje i filosofija života: skica za aktualizaciju međuratne rasprave o ideji svetosavlja (Retractatio)* [The cosmopolitan world and the philosophy of life: a sketch for the actualization of the interwar debate on the idea of the holy world (Retractatio), 2019].

SRĐAN ŠLJUKIĆ (b. Sombor, 1964) graduated from, and was awarded master’s and doctoral degrees by, the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad in the field of Sociology. His main interests are in the rural sociology (changes in the social structure of the village and farmers’ cooperatives) and the sociology of social conflicts. Books published: *Urbana kultura – osnova održive multikulturalnosti* [Urban Culture: The Basis of Sustainable Multiculturalism, as co-author, 2003]; *Raskršća Srbije* [Serbia’s Junctures, as co-author, 2007]; *Seljak i zadruga u ravnici* [The Peasant and the Co-Operative in the Lowland, 2009]; *Mitovi epohe socijalizma* [The Myths of the Socialist Epoch, as co-author, 2010]; *Mit kao sudbina – prilog demitologizaciji demitologizacije* [Myth as Destiny: A Contribution to the Demythologization of Demythologization, 2011]; *Zemlja i ljudi – seljaštvo i društvena struktura* [Land and the People: Peasantry and the Structure of the Society, as co-author, 2012]; *Selo u sociološkom ogledalu* [The Village in a Sociological Mirror, as co-author, 2015]; *Društvo i sukob* [The Society and Conflict, 2018].

DRAGIŠA VASIĆ (Gornji Milanovac, 1885–Jasenovac, Croatia, 1945) was a literary author, publicist and politician. He graduated from the Faculty of Law in Belgrade and spent a year in France working on his French. In Belgrade, he owned a lawyer’s office. As an army reserve officer Vasić fought

in the Balkan Wars and World War One (1912–1918). Dissatisfied with the situation in the country after the war, he quit his career in law and began to pursue journalism. As one of the editors in the newspaper *Progres*, and an associate contributor to *Republika*, he sharply criticized the monarchy and its authorities. Officially, he entered the political scene in 1921, through membership in the Republican Party. His political attitude suffered a turn in 1924, and the leftist in him was transformed into a hardline nationalist oriented toward tradition. Back to his profession of the lawyer, he intensely practised literary work. He was one of the co-founders of the Serbian Cultural Club (1937) and the Editor-in-Chief of its newsletter, *Srpski glas* (*Serbian Voice*, from 1939), in which he published articles that appealed for the gathering of Serbdom in order to create ‘Serbian Lands’ within Yugoslavia. At the beginning of World War Two, he joined the chetnik movement of Draža Mihailović as the leader’s adviser in political matters. How his life came to an end is still not known: he is supposed to have been executed with a large number of his fellow chetnik officers in the notorious concentration camp at Jasenovac. Vasić wrote novels, short stories, as well as historical and political treatises and studies. Novels: *Crvene magle* [*Red Fogs*, 1922]; *Crvene magle. Pokošeno polje* [*Red Fogs. The Mowed Fields*, 2018]. Books of short stories: *Utljena kandila* [*The Snuffed-Out Oil Cups*, 1922]; *Vitlo i druge priče* [*The Winch and Other Stories*, 1924]; *Bakuć Ulija*, 1924; *Utisci iz Rusije* [*Impressions from Russia*, 1928]; *Pripovetke* [*Short Stories*, 1929, 2017]; *Pad sa građevine* [*Fall from a Building under Construction*, 1932]; *Najlepše priče Dragiše Vasića* [*The Most Appealing Stories by Dragiša Vasić*, 2002]. Other books: *Karakter i mentalitet jednog pokolenja* [*The Character and Mindset of a Generation*, 1919]; *Dva meseca u jugoslovenskom Sibiru* [*Two Months in Yugoslav Siberia*, 1921]; *Devetsto treća: (majski prevrat): prilozi za istoriju Srbije od 8. jula 1900. do 17. januara 1907.* [*The Year 1903: (May Overthrow): Contributions for the History of Serbia from July 8, 1900 to January 17, 1907*, 1925]; *Neobjavljeni članci* [*Unpublished Articles*, 2009]. Collected works: *Odabrana dela* [*Selected Works*, 1990]; *Izabrana dela* [*Selected Works*, 2004]; *Dragiša Vasić*, 2012; *Izabrana dela* [*Selected Works*, 2019]. His short stories were translated into the Czech language.

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