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Serbian Historiography and the Modern State

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Osnovni zaključak studije Srpska istoriografija i država je, da postoji tesna korelacija između transformacija srpske države i srpske istoriografije. Njihova međusobna povezanost se može pratiti od nastanka srpske države i zametaka srpske istoriografije u srednjem veku, do današnjeg dana.

Obećavajući počeci srpske istoriografije u srednjem veku prekinuti su osmanskim osvajanjima, i tokom sledeća gotovo tri veka njen razvoj je stagnirao. Podsticaj nastanku moderne srpske istoriografije je dala seoba Srba u Habsburšku monarhiju 1690. godine. Srbi su se u novoj domovini našli u kulturnim, društvenim i političkim okolnostima koji su, za razliku od Osmanske imperije, podsticajno delovali na njihovu političku i kulturnu aktivnost. U tom kontekstu razvijala se i svesna delatnost Srpske pravoslavne crkve i srpske inteligencije usmerena na uzdizanje opšteg obrazovnog nivoa stanovništva kao i na očuvanje verskih, kulturnih i nacionalnih osobenosti srpskog naroda.

U vezi sa tim javili su se i počeci moderne srpske istoriografije. Njenu osnovu čine s jedne strane dela srpskih istoriografa (P. Julinac, Đ. Branković i J. Rajić), a s druge strane nesrpskih autora koji su se bavili istorijom Srba i čiji su radovi inkorporirani u tkivo novovekovne srpske istoriografije.

U vremenim od početaka moderne srpske istoriografije do stabilizovanja srpske države u poslednjim decenijama 19. veka, centralni problem srpske nacionalne politike, ali i istoriografije bila je široka problematika nacionalnog oslobođenja i ujedinjenja. U skladu sa tim, za srpsku istoriografiju je bila karakteristična nacionalno-romantičarska obojenost. Tek posle 1878. godine srpska istoriografija je ušla u period mirnijeg razvitka tokom kojeg su čvrsto položeni temelji kritičkoj analizi istorijskih izvora i naučom pristupu u istoriografiji.

Period napretka i stasavanja srpske moderne istoriografije je prekinut dubokim istorijskim previranjima. Balkanski ratovi, Prvi i Drugi svetski rat, socijalistički period, a kasnije Miloševićeva era su produkovali toliko složene, višeslojne i duboke političke, ekonomske, društvene i demografske promene, da to srpska istoriografija nije bila u stanju u adekvatnoj meri istražiti, interpretirati i prezentovati. Uz to, tokom spomenutih decenija posao istoričara zagorčavala su teška ideološka ograničenja i političke presije.

Uprkos svim nedaćama tokom 20. veka srpska istoriografija je ipak zabeležila razvoj i lepe naučne rezultate i u slučaju dužeg perioda političke i društvene stabilnosti mogla bi doživeti novu fazu poleta.

The intention of this chapter is to try to point out the connections between the changes of the Serbian state and Serbian historiography and to clarify whether there are connections between those changes and the shifts in the focal points of historical research. In addition, I also wish to trace the development of Serbian historiography in its general lines.

At the outset, it should be pointed out that Serbian historiography is young and that, as such, it has certain deficiencies. One of them is a lack of works dedicated to the history of Serbian historiography itself, although for the last fifteen years the interest in this field has noticeably intensified. There has been a very small number of papers dealing with the period up to World War II: in all two papers and an article in an *Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia*¹. Accordingly, this chapter will be a kind of a review of the issue or, perhaps, a rough sketch for a later study. For an adequate analysis of the topic 'Serbian historiography and the state', broader and more detailed research requiring quite a bit of time must be carried out, for Serbian history itself has been only partly explored and explained, and it is rather complex.

Serbian history is a real challenge for historical research, since it is very rich in events and is like the history of the entire Balkan area on a smaller scale: with frequent changes of the state borders, migrations, a mixture of influences of various civilizations and ethnically, religiously and culturally different communities that live together – such a situation has given rise to various problems of determination of identity, multiple identities and the almost permanent presence of inter-ethnic relationship issues. The reciprocal cultural influences have been accompanied by questions of discrimination and tolerance. At the same time, patriarchal Serbian and Balkan society up until the last centuries has been a real treasure for the study of unique gender roles. Frequent changes of the borders and within the political system and a long-term discontinuity in Serbian statehood have resulted in insufficient development and differentiation of the governmental, educational and cultural institutions, and in the wide-spread belief that constant large-scale social changes and dilemmas, in connection with affiliation with or orientation toward different civilisations, are unavoidable.

THE EARLY PERIOD OF SERBIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

At its beginning, Serbian statehood was bipolar: one centre of organization was in Zeta (where there was a kingdom from 1014), and the other in Raška, under the authority of the Nemanjićs family (1167-1371). During the reign of Stefan Dušan (1335-1355) Serbia was at the height of its power: it was an empire that extended from the rivers Danube and Sava to the Peloponnesian Peninsula. However, the death of the emperor Dušan coincided with the beginning of the Turkish conquests on the Balkan Peninsula, and the disappearance of his dynasty from the historical scene coincided with the battle of Marica, which was crucial for the history of the Balkans. During the reign of the Hrebeljanović (1371-1427) and Branković dynasties, the borders of Serbia became considerably smaller and shifted towards the northwest, while the state itself came under the Turkish and Hungarian protectorate.

The rise and fall of early Serbian historiography follows the dynamics of the Serbian state and has some similarities to developments in other parts of Europe. As in other European countries, the first historiography works emerged at the medieval courts: in the Serbian case it is at the Nemanjićs' court that such accomplishments appear for the first time. These first works were of hagiographic character and their authors were the first Serbian king Stefan Prvovenčani and his brother, the founder of the Serbian Orthodox Church, archbishop Sava. They both, separately, described the life and acts of their father Stefan Nemanja, the founder of the Nemanjićs dynasty. In the following decades members of the royal family and prominent political and ecclesiastical people created similar hagiographic works. These works were biographies of Serbian rulers and were composed under the strong influence of Byzantine literature and models from the west, as well. Although they are strongly marked by their own political interests and are quite biased, they still represent a relatively rich source for the history of the first decades and the later life of a Serbian state. To the great regret of historians, there is not the slightest reference to earlier Serbian history and previous attempts at forming a Serbian state. We must add that from the second half of the 14th century on, hagiographic texts very rarely supply us with information on historiography. Some historical information can be found on the margins of the books.

After more than a quarter of a century of political crisis following the death of czar Dušan, there was a period of consolidation of a Serbian state under Stefan Lazarević (1389-1427). There was cultural progress, including new developments in historiography. The biographies which had been popular in Nemanjićs' time now acquired new subject matter, and some new literary forms appeared. Byzantine chronicles were gladly translated and native chronicles and genealogies appeared. There were annotations and observations on current events as well as praises of important personalities: to an extent these works can serve as a historical sources.

DISCONTINUITY OF THE SERBIAN STATE AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

The fall of Serbia in 1459, among other consequences, resulted in a long-term interruption in the progress of Serbian historiography – it seems almost as if time stopped for two centuries. For Serbian historiography and for Serbs, as well as for other Balkan people, Turkish rule meant the beginning of the “dark Middle Ages”. Until the restoration of a Serbian state at the beginning of the 19th century and thanks to migrations and changes in state borders, the Serbian people lived in the territory of several states: the Turkish and the Habsburg Empires, the Kingdom of Hungary, the Principality of Transylvania and the Venetian state.

This discontinuity in statehood, lasting 371 years, has been of defining importance for Serbian historiography. The disappearance of the Serbian state caused the loss of almost all the social and institutional conditions for the development of a historiography until the beginning of the 18th century. By that time it had lost the possibility of going through the phases of development that characterized central and western Euro-

pean historiography from the age of humanism until the Enlightenment. It is true that chronicles continued to be produced in the monasteries of Serbia and Bosnia, but they were without significance for the development of historiography at the time. Aside from them, up until the end of the 17th century, only one biography worth mentioning appeared; it was the work of the Patriarch Pajsije and was entitled *A Hagiography of Czar Uroš*. However, it is more legendary than historical in character.

On the other hand, the importance of statehood for Serbian history has always attracted the attention of Serbian politicians and historians primarily to the periods when the Serbian state existed, in the Middle Ages, and to the events of the 19th and 20th centuries or to problems connected to the restoration of statehood and the transformations of the Serbian state. These fundamental traits of Serbian historiography determined the fact that numerous economical, religious, social, social-demographic, legal, methodological and other historical issues of great importance remained outside the perspective of Serbian historians until the 20th century. The largest lacuna in Serbian historiography has certainly been the period of almost four hundred years of Turkish rule, which has been the object of an unpardonably small number of historiographical contributions, and there is also very little documentation from that period. Research on that period has been carried out to a somewhat greater extent only after World War II. The topics most frequently dealt with are those connected with the character of Turkish rule, the role and position of the Serbs in that empire, the survival of Serbian Orthodox Church and aspects of resistance to Turkish authority.

The Middle Ages attract the attention of numerous Serbian historians due to the Nemanjićs family's very successful state-building policies and their great success in the extension of medieval Serbian borders. Thus the main research themes are the process of creation of the State, relations within the ruler's house, relations with the neighbouring countries, successes in foreign relation, the social structure and the legal system of Nemanjićs Serbia. The successes of medieval Serbia have stimulated historians to investigate the economic history of that age, particularly the history of trade, handicrafts and mining.

The consequences of Serbian migrations and the survival of the Serbian Orthodox Church were of great importance for the survival of the idea of Serbian statehood – along with the statehood of Montenegro that until the second half of the 18th century was still of less importance for the entire Serbian people.

Serbian migrations were caused by the Turkish penetration in the Balkans. Beginning with the battle of Kosovo (1389), Serbian migrations continued, with varied dynamics and intensity, one could say up to the present. For our present purpose it is of great interest that the migrations expanded the borders of Serbian ethnic territories far beyond the medieval state, reaching southern Hungary, Slavonia, the eastern parts of Croatia, western Bosnia, etc., and this too, and not only the formation of the modern Serbian state, was of crucial importance.

The survival of the Serbian Orthodox Church as the only element of the Nemanjićs state after the Turkish conquests has a huge historical significance and multiple con-

sequences for the history of Serbs. During the centuries in which the Serbian state did not exist, the main factor that preserved Serbian ethnic consciousness was the Serbian Orthodox Church with its broad organisation and its almost continuous and deliberate activity toward preserving cohesion and the memory of Nemanjić's state. It had a legally regulated position within the Turkish Empire with substantial autonomous jurisdictions that extended to secular as well as to religious and educational issues – to a certain point. As the bearer of an idea of Serbian statehood and a tradition of king–saints, the Serbian Orthodox Church persistently maintained awareness of the national identity and the glorious past and systematically developed a sense of religious solidarity among Serbs. To be of Serbian nationality meant to be of the Orthodox religion and to regard the Serbian state tradition as identical to belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church². Within the Turkish Empire, the Serbian Orthodox Church performed its role as it did in the Habsburg monarchy (with the patriarchate of Peć, 1557-1767; with a diocese of a metropolitan in Sremski Karlovci, 1695-1920) thanks to its organization and privileges, constantly following Serbian migrations.

We must indicate one more very important element of ethnic cohesion and self-consciousness: Serbian folk poems. There were many poems dedicated to the saintly Nemanjić king, to the Nemanjić state, to Serbian heroes and heroines who died in the struggle with Turks. Most of them were dedicated to the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. It was a very rich, very beautiful and also a very effective means of maintaining ethnic self-consciousness.

In a general sense, and particularly for the Serbian national renaissance and self-consciousness, migrations to Hungary, above all the Great Migrations in 1690, constituted a decisive moment. The Serbs found themselves within political, social and cultural conditions that stimulated their cultural and political activity and enabled them to accept the influences especially of central European culture, and Russian culture as well. For these reasons, the Serbs from Hungary became the main creators and bearers of Serbian culture, and of Serbian historiography as well, and they played a significant role in the formation and stabilization of modern Serbian culture and in Serbia's cultural and educational life until the second half of the 19th century. Migration to Hungary had two more important historical consequences: the Serbs, along with their ethnic links and economic and religious activity, formed a special bond between central Europe and the Balkans; and, what is of great importance, in time, the Serbs from southern Hungary formed a third centre of Serbian nation building. Furthermore, after the First Serbian Uprising, the Serbs from the Habsburg monarchy played an irreplaceable role in the formation of the Serbian state of modern times, by formulating the first Serbian laws, the first Serbian constitution, organizing the armed forces and the state administration, initiating the revitalization of Serbian culture; and by transferring contemporary European technical, political, cultural and educational ideas and achievements to Serbia. All this had major impact on reshaping the Serbian oriental mentality and lifestyle according to European parameters.

After 1690, it seems as if the wheels of time started to roll again for Serbian history and historiography. Because of that impression, numerous Serbian historians have con-

sidered 1690 the starting point of the history of their nation in modern times. Events from the early modern period are rarely examined and even then largely in connection with the migration of Serbs to Hungary and Croatia at the turn of the 15th century, and their existence in the framework of the Habsburg state. From the point of view of Serbian historiography, the history of the Serbs under Ottoman rule is mainly considered for a limited part of the period: from the second half of the 18th century in connection with the Austro-Turkish wars (1716-1718, 1737-1739, and 1787-1791) and their consequences.

The new social and political environment stimulated Serbian intellectuals to take into consideration not only their legal and social status in the new homeland, but also the real possibilities for national liberation from Turkish rule of their brothers on the Balkan Peninsula. Historiography testifies that there were a considerable number of plans for the restoration of the Serbian state. In the second half of the 18th century, in accordance with the historical tradition and balance of power at that time in the Balkans, the Serbs considered that statehood could be restored with the help of the Habsburgs within the scope of a victorious campaign against Turkey, during which a restored Serbia would be a vassal of the Habsburg monarchy. After the peace of Svištov in 1791, the expectations of the Serbs turned towards Russia and a series of projects emerged that foresaw the liberation of the Serbs under the leadership of the Russian Empire and the creation of a Serbian state, the head of which would be a member of the ruling Russian dynasty. During the Russian-Turkish War 1806-1808, the possibility of creating a Russian-Slovenian-Serbian state was considered. Some also thought that France or Montenegro could have a leading role. According to these hypotheses, the territory of a restored Serbia should include former Serbia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Albania, and then, according to even more ambitious plans, Bulgaria, Macedonia and some parts of Hungary.

However, historical development went in other directions. The restoration of Serbia came about as a result of two Serbian uprisings, the military and diplomatic pressure of Russia on Turkey and Miloš Obrenović's intelligent politics. After the restoration of Serbian statehood in 1804-1830, Serbian history was revitalised. Serbia's borders were expanded in 1833 and 1878 when, according to the decisions made by Congress of Berlin, it acquired independence, as did Montenegro. Territorial expansion during the Balkan Wars ensured Serbia the status of a regional power, and when the Serbian-Croat-Slovenian Kingdom was formed after World War I, it appeared that she had further growth before her.

FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN SERBIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

However, the foundations of modern Serbian historiography were laid down decades before the Serbian state was restored. As migration towards the Habsburg monarchy represented a crossroads in Serbian history, it also represented a turning point in the development of Serbian historiography. It was marked by the emergence of the first

modern Serbian historical works, under the fertile influence of Enlightenment ideas; works of foreign authors also stimulated the Serbian historical thought.

Until the beginning of the 18th century Serbian historiography did not have the conditions necessary for its development. For that reason, some foreign historiographical works that dealt with the history of the Serbian people were incorporated to create the background. As historical circumstances turned out, the context of those works was in accordance with the deepest Serbian wishes connected to the necessity of liberation from the Turkish reign and the restoration of the Serbian state. However, those works brought even broader views and new thoughts: the first common history of southern Slavs is the famous book by Mavro Orbini, *Il Regno degli Slavi* (1601) who promoted the idea of Slovenian unity. The significance of Orbini's work was augmented by the fact that it was translated into Russian in 1722, and it had a certain influence on Russian policy towards the Balkans after that. As it turned out later, the dilemma of deciding between the engaging perspective of the unification of southern Slavs lands and the tradition of the Serbian statehood affixed a seal to Serbian political thought, and even to Serbian historiography up to the present.

The historical works of foreign authors, partly or entirely dedicated to the history of the Serbian people, represented a precious contribution to filling in the gaps in Serbian historiography during the 18th century. However, foreign works were used even later, when modern Serbian historiography had already given its first results. We have in mind, above all, the works of Pavle Riter Vitezović, Hristofor Žefarović, Jovan Tomka Saski, Christian Engel, F. Ks Pejačević, Leopold von Ranke, L.A. Gebhardi, Kállay Béni, Konstantin Jireček and others. Apart from filling in the gaps, those works served as an example for Serbian politicians, as a repertory of facts and as stimulus for reflecting upon their own history, as well as being important for historiography.

The enlightened ideas of educators that were spreading in Russia and in Vienna emphasized the importance of education, strengthening the knowledge of their own history and the affirmation of science, scientific work, and the importance of national culture. Thus, even the first Serbian educator, Zaharije Orfelin, in his *Magazin*, in 1768, invited the Serbs to examine and write their own history. In reality, the first Serbian historiographical works appeared in the 18th century. At the beginning and at the end of the century, two major works of Serbian historiography were written. They consisted of several volumes: a book by Count Đorđe Branković (*Chronicles*, written in 1690-1711, which remained in manuscript form) and a famous work by the father of Serbian historiography Jovan Rajić (*Istorija raznyh Slavenskih narodov, najpače Bolgar, Horvatov i Serbov* [The History of different Slav nations, particularly of Bulgarians, Croatians and Serbs], I-IV, 1794-1795). Among the few Serbian books published in Venice during the 18th century there was the first real Serbian history, written by the diplomat and army officer Pavle Julinac (1765).

The book of the previously mentioned three Serbs from the Habsburg monarchy and the historiographical works of non-Serbian authors formed the foundation of mod-

ern Serbian historiography. In addition, all three authors enriched their topics by including them in broader historical and geographical frameworks: Count Branković's work places Serbian history in the south-eastern European framework, while Rajić and Julinac places it in the South Slovenian one. However, these works are characterized by the same basic guiding thought: that the Serbs must free themselves from foreign rule and restore their state. Branković's and Rajić's histories have also been significant because they published both excerpts from valuable historical sources and complete documents.

SERBIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY UNTIL THE BALKAN WARS

In practice, after the publication of Rajić's *History*, we begin to see the rise of a modern Serbian historiography. The starting point for development was very modest (the above mentioned small number of foreign and Serbian historiographical works from previous centuries, in the absence of collections of published sources, and without educational and cultural institutions to support the development of historiography effectively) and, in parallel with the rise of the Serbian state, without firm support, and with a lot of dilemmas and doubts. In addition, the progress of Serbian historiography has in many points been associated with the process of restoration of the Serbian state: both have been marked by a strong presence of western European ideas and cultural influences, there were many points of direct correspondence between Serbian historiography and national politics, and at the same time, historians have often been the most passionate and the most efficient promoters of the national ideas. Historians have often been diplomats and even statesmen.

Until the second half of the 19th century, historiographical works were written mainly by Serbs from Hungary. These works were characterised first by Enlightenment and later by Romantic ideas, but most of all by the atmosphere of the national renaissance and the echo of Serbian uprisings. History was then considered one of the most important and the most powerful means of strengthening the national consciousness, so the national spirit represented the strongest motivation for writing such works. The public did not prize history books for their subject matter and objectivity, but according to how much they were imbued with the national spirit and how much they emphasized the national unity of the Serbian people. The aims of the Serbian press, theatrical arts and literature at the time were the same.

From very beginnings, one of the main characteristics of Serbian historiography was its emphasis on the history of the Serbian state – from the point of view of the possibility of restoring the state and of contributing to the goals of national politics. In this regard, for the first Serbian historians, re-establishing the Serbian state had the highest priority – as we have mentioned above – with the help of Austria or Russia, by means of revolution and the force of arms. Aware of the political, cultural and economical weakness of the Serbian nation, Branković, Rajić and other early Serbian historians were thinking in terms of south-Slav cooperation and a south-Slav multiethnic and multi-confessional

state (as an independent state or under Habsburg or Russian sovereignty). Because of this orientation and also because of that of the Enlightenment, the idea that religious affiliation is not the essential factor for the formation of a modern nation arose. In the next decades this idea was to be both criticized and supported by historians and other intellectuals – but most of all, it was to be manipulated by politicians. After the defeat of the Serbian uprisings, the Serbian intellectual elite realized that national liberation could not be achieved by force, but only through diplomacy under the auspices of Austria and Russia and to a much lesser extent than had been imagined before. Accordingly, both in politics and in historiographical texts, there was a shift from planning a large scale south-Slav state to thinking, more realistically, of a smaller Serbian state.

The needs of national politics, romanticism and the lack of sufficient sources for studying the recent past resulted in an orientation towards medieval history that, furthermore, offered excellent material for national inspiration. To some extent, the choice of sources was subordinated to the national renaissance, so it took a long time for Serbian historiography to reject the medieval and later on the national tradition as a historical theme. It goes without saying that the romantic approach had negative consequences for the development of a critical attitude. Although Jovan Rajić himself and, until the 1840s, even T.A. Popović and others emphasized the necessity of a critical use of the sources, and that the one should not exaggerate with the praise of one's own history, the national-romantic approach to historiography lasted well into the second half of the 19th century.

After the 1830s, it became clear that the further development of Serbian historiography would be impossible unless Serbian historical sources were published. Strong stimulus in this direction came from the example of the Hungarian Academy of Science in 1837 through its large-scale publication of historical sources. In his newspapers, an influential liberal journalist, Teodor Pavlović, invited the Serbian National Parliament to initiate, by its authority, the gathering of the very vast documentary material with the aim of composing a synthesis of the entire national history and that of the Serbian Orthodox Church. A decade later the minister Kosta Nikolajević issued a proclamation on gathering materials on Serbian history. Thanks to those initiatives historical sources were gradually published, especially in magazines and newspapers; the first collections of documents were published as well.

In the second half of the 19th century, Serbian historiography was characterized by the publication of monographs and collections of historical sources and by the affirmation of Serbian critics. The ascent of Serbian historiography was linked to the appearance of the first heralds of historical criticism: Jovan Sterija Popović and Aleksandar Stojaković became the first to write substantial historical papers provided with scientific apparatus. Nevertheless, in the progress of Serbian historical criticism an essential role was that of the growing number of published sources and monographs, along with the activity of Ilarion Ruvarac, known as the father of Serbian historical criticism. He established the principle that a historical fact can be considered such only if it appears in a thoroughly checked and reliable historical source. From his time on, proper histori-

cal criticism became a criterion for distinguishing serious historical papers; however, the path towards full acceptance of a scientific attitude was not easy. Long and bitter discussions were common, during which historical criticism and scientific standards competed with national and patriotic feelings as well as with the romantic ideas of amateur historians, politicians, authors and the public. The result of this process was a situation in which, around the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, historical monographs were judged critically by a more expert public, so that authoring historiographical works became linked to a growing sense of responsibility. For this reason, dilettantes' works or those of authors supporting extreme political tendencies were greeted by almost unanimous protest.

At the same time, Serb historians educated in Vienna and in other foreign universities went one step further, and began the study of fields that until then had been largely neglected: history from the 15th to the 18th century, the history of Turkey, the Republic of Dubrovnik and Mediterranean. The rich Austrian historical material was beginning to be investigated as well. Syntheses of Serbian history were written; the history of the Serbs was put into the broader context of European history. There were a few historians who studied methodological questions. A step towards broader views and the application of modern European methodological principles was taken through the works of Jovan Skerlić, Jovan Cvijić and Milan Đ. Miličević. In the 19th and 20th centuries the main foreign influences came from Germany and France. In the beginning the strongest influence was that of the philological school of Vienna. At the turn of the century the main attribute of Serbian historiography was positivism; afterwards, Serbian historiography experienced a significant influence from the French school of the *Annales* and from Marxism.

The more relaxed and objective tone of Serbian historiography in the last decades of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century was in part due to the circumstance that Serbia was then already an independent kingdom, a political, national and even cultural centre around which the Serbian people could gather. It was also a regional force. Therefore, the political and governmental tools of national policy already existed, so there was no need for historiography to perform the function of fighting for those any longer. A further important circumstance was that Serbia – and, along with it, Serbian historiography – was going through one of its more peaceful periods, without any deep political and economic upheavals. This situation provided the background for ever greater success in the scientific treatment of the past⁴.

Serbian historiography devoted considerable intellectual energy to explaining the rise of the modern Serbian state and it did not have any special difficulties in doing so. At first, both Serbian uprisings were considered justifiable revolts against Turkish oppression, which had intensified at the beginning of the 19th century. Thanks to the greater knowledge of the sources and more thorough analysis, the conclusion was drawn that those events could be considered a revolution (a Serbian one, 1804-1830), resulting not only in the restoration of the Serbian state but also in deep social, demographic and economic changes, including the abolition of the feudal system. The history of Ser-

bia was observed through the perspective of the Eastern Question and some historians even claimed that the history of Serbia was actually the history of the Eastern Question on a small-scale.

Just as the restoration of the Serbian state represented a joyous event for the Serbian nation, it also caused at least the same amount of reason for concern. While a state organization and an educational system could be built and cultural institutions formed relying on native forces – in which the Serbs from Hungary had a significant role – relations towards other countries and nations presented a more complex and serious issue.

The problem of state borders and that of the political and ethnical character of Serbian state determined the main fields of interests and the nature of Serbian historiography through the 19th and 20th centuries. Roughly, we can conclude that the question of Serbian state frontiers has been a question of current interest for Serbian state politics and historiography from Karađorđe Petrović's time until the present day. One of the consequences of this orientation was the emphasis on political and diplomatic history. Moreover, historians, until today, mainly discussed the political problems of the birth and transformation of the Serbian state, rather than the problems of its structure, or the economic, legal, ideological and cultural bases and elements of its existence and development. Also, they did not dedicate enough energy to clarifying the multiple cultural, economical, legislative and historical differences between its components. From the formation of the Principality of Serbia in 1830, under the impression of the actual strengthening and growth of Serbia, and in connection to Serbian state politics, historians gradually abandoned the concept of a south-Slav state (especially the possibility of such a state in the frame of the Habsburg state as preferred by Illyrian Movement), or the concept of a small Serbian state in favour of an idea of a strong, centralized Serbian national state, as big as possible. Contemporary and later historians agreed that the mission of Serbia was to emancipate and unify Serbs regardless of where they lived. Of course, the first step had to be the liberation of the Serbs under Ottoman rule – which triggered difficult diplomatic, cultural and political problems.

In the 19th century, it was a common belief that Serbia as a small state would not be able to maintain its position among the great powers such as Turkey, Austria and Russia, and that territorial expansion was necessary for this reason. At the same time, the Greeks and the Bulgarians also intended to rebuild their medieval empires, so the Serbs had to face the challenges of other competing national aspirations. This, automatically, put the question of the character of a state and its territorial pretensions on the agenda: alluding to medieval statehood and its historical rights or to the current ethnic principle and the acceptance of the concept of a cultural nation upon the German model. The first variant was linked to expansion towards the south accompanied by a desirable but uncertain cooperation with the Bulgarians and the Greeks. Of course, the question that arose was which medieval frontiers should be considered real: those of Nemanjićs' original state, of Dušan's Empire or those of Branković's Serbia? If expansion towards the south alone were to be considered, the Serbian people that during the Middle Age and at the beginning of the Modern Age inhabited the south of Hungary, *Srem*, Slavo-

nia and Croatia would be left out: hence it would be advantageous to expand into both directions, if possible. However, this was against the vital interests of the two neighbouring empires and it involved the very complicated question of the mutual relations of all the Yugoslav nations.

The balance of power of the time allowed only expansion to the detriment of the Turkish Empire. Accordingly, a long-term plan was formulated for Serbian national and governmental politics. *Načertanije*, authored by Ilija Garašanin, served as the foundation of Serbian policies until 1918. This extraordinarily important secret document of the Serbian ruling elite – that remained unknown to Serbian historiography until the end of the 19th century – assumed that the Serbs are one nation, regardless of state borders. Later historiography and politicians have often blamed the thesis presented in the *Načertanije* for causing World War I, for the conception of the idea of Great Serbia and also for the development of the idea of a strongly centralized unitary Yugoslavia with one Yugoslav nation.

Ilija Garašanin formulated the national Serbian aims much more rationally and realistically than his critics held. Alluding to a historical right, based on the former Serbian Empire and the glorious past of the Serbian nation, Garašanin's main goal was a creation of a great and strong Serbian state by unification of the Serbs then under the Turkish Empire. As he pointed out, forming such a state would be in conformity with the interests of England and France, maintaining the stability of south-eastern Europe by positioning a respectful state between Austria and Russia.

Garašanin did not link the realization of those goals to either one of the Serbian dynasties nor did he foresee a timeframe for the realization of his plans; however, it was considered that the preparations should be started immediately and proceed continuously towards the creation of favourable military-political and diplomatic conditions. So Garašanin sent emissaries into the south Slavic – above all, Serbian – areas soon afterwards, so that they could clear the way towards the fulfilment of the aims prescribed in his *Načertanije*. He intended to carry out the programme gradually, and not through a revolution: “To state it briefly: Serbia must strive to take stone by stone from the old building of the Turkish state, so as to build a new and great Serbian state out of such good material, on the good old foundation of the medieval Serbian Empire³”.

Basically the *Načertanije* foresees the liberation of Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Albania. Although it does not state this explicitly, the content of the text implies that the future state should arise in several stages: first, the Serbian states under Turkish authority would unite; after that, the Serbs from the southern Hungary would be annexed. During this stage the state would continue to have a Serbian character. With further unification with Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia it would acquire a south Slavic character. If Bulgaria should enter, a real south Slavic state would be formed. It is important to emphasise that according to the Serbian intellectual and political elite even this broadest version of a southern Slav state was to be formed by means of Serbian state politics and according to Serbian national and dynastic interests.

A unification of all the Serbs within one state opened a much broader range of questions: relations with the Croats and Montenegro, the question of Bosnia and Herzegovina; the foundation of the union with the Slavs and a number of other questions that would be understood by the politicians and historiographers in their full seriousness only after the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (SCS), and the realisation of the differences between the legal systems, mentalities, cultures, economic development and so forth.

The initial dilemmas were made more acute by the appearance of the 'Illyrian Movement' in the political and cultural life of southern Slavs. Proceeding from the assumption that its position towards the Vienna court and the Hungarians should be reinforced, leading figures of the national renaissance, from the 1830s on, expressed their willingness to implement a broad cooperation with the Serbs – in the Habsburg Monarchy, as well as outside it. The Illyrian Movement spread propaganda about the common origin of the Yugoslav nations and the need for achieving cultural unity with the final aim of political and state unity of southern Slavs. It was not a new idea, as a similar concept it was present in political thought ever since Orbini and the development of Pan-Slavism; however, at that moment it offered excellent possibilities for cultural and political cooperation. An idea was formulated positing a single nation of three "tribes": Croats, Serbians and Slavs had different alphabets, belonged to different religions, but had the same origin and interests: the protection of the nation and the alphabet against Hungarians, Italians, Turks and Germans. Even the common standard Serbian and Croatian language was accepted. It was to become the foundation of cultural and later even political unity.

Both nations considered the realization of a common state possible only under favourable international conditions in a distant future. Thinking in tactical terms, the Croats considered that having a common state within the framework of the Habsburg Monarchy, separate from the Hungarian independent unit, and retaining the attributes of Croatian statehood was a real achievement. For Serbian politicians, however, no solution was acceptable if it would endanger the statehood of Serbia, nor they did they want to dissolve their newly restored state into a common state formation where they would not have a dominant political role. On the other hand, they considered the cultural cooperation and coming together of other Yugoslav nations acceptable just because of the long-range aims as formulated in *Načertanije*. Leading Serbian figures considered cooperation acceptable on the cultural level and within certain segments of political activity, until a deeper political cooperation – depending upon broader regional, political events and the balance of power – could be achieved.

TOO MUCH HISTORY

For a while it looked like the answers to all questions presented above had been given by the Balkan Wars and World War I. In the Balkan Wars, Serbia extended her territory over all the Serbs under Ottoman authority. In World War I Serbia succeeded in unifying not only all the Serbs of the Balkan peninsula but almost all Yugoslav nations (ex-

cept the Bulgarians) in the framework of a centralized state – this is essential – through Serbian politics, the Serbian army and Serbian diplomacy. As would become clear later, problems had increased in number instead of diminishing. Nevertheless, at the time of the unification of the Yugoslav countries and the creation of a new beautiful and rich country and a respectable regional force, political, constitutional, legal and national dilemmas were muted for a certain period, leaving some space for the concrete tasks of integration of diverse Yugoslav regions. We have to say that unification had its best effects not on politics but on the progress of culture – including historiography.

Unification stimulated historians to broaden their fields of interest significantly and above all to recognize their research interests within the context of southern Slav history and to expand them to include the historical relations and cooperation between Yugoslav nations in the past. Examples of community, tolerant relations and ancient ideas about the community and unification were emphasized – often with the ultimate intention of demonstrating that the liberation and unification of the Yugoslav people was a historical necessity. To explain the contrasts between the centralized political system and the multiethnic, multi-confessional character of its population, it was emphasized that Serbs, Croats and Slovenians were “one nation of three tribes”, regardless of the fact that their numerous differences were many-layered. Even though that concept, in final analysis, was contradictory and inadequate, it was considered to be the inevitable ideological cornerstone of the tripartite community⁴.

The joy of unification, however, was soured by unsolved political questions and numerous differences between the unified regions. Based on political and not on scientific foundations, the conception of a tri-tribal nation was in many respects on a collision course with the previous main directions of development of the history of the Yugoslav nation and the representatives of other nations that lived in Yugoslavia. For survival, a strong foundation based on life in common should have been found, though it appeared to be a very difficult or even insoluble problem. Political tensions were increased by the fact that neither the Serbs nor the Croats were satisfied with the newly created political system. The Serbs considered that their state, with the creation of Yugoslavia, had been diluted and brought into question, and the Croats were dissatisfied because they were convinced that they had lost something that, within the state community with Hungary, they had timidly managed to preserve for the last eight hundred years – their statehood. Some Montenegrins reacted in the same way. Then there was the question of the political system, which was difficult to disentangle: would the new country be unitary or would it be federal? The problems of Macedonian and Montenegrin nationhood were smouldering, as were those of the status of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that of national minorities. Above all, there was the question of Albanians, Hungarians, Germans and other nations as well. Yugoslavia was supposed to represent a solution for the Yugoslav nation’s national problems and to allow further affirmation. However, that was impossible in the absence of a consistent adherence to democratic principles within inter-ethnic relations and within the political system – which was the reason that Yugoslavia almost instantly disintegrated in World War II.

The speed of change in the historical scene during the 20th century was amazing. Serbian historians have not succeeded in exploring the events of the Balkans and World War I, nor the processes that led to the unification of the southern Slavs, the disintegration of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and the grave and complex events and processes of World War II. Thus there remain almost countless new challenges for future Serbian historians. The war era was quickly followed by the process of rebuilding the old and establishing new Yugoslav states (Macedonia, Slovenia), and their reunification under entirely new conditions. The political and social systems were radically changed; the region suffered heavy human and material losses; the system of alliances was changed. Serbian historians had to deal with ancient and unsolved as well as new historical and methodological problems in a new political and social environment, with a decimated scientific and professional staff, restrained by numerous limits of political origin.

Yugoslavia became a socialist and federal republic. The Karađorđević dynasty was expelled. Nevertheless, the federal organization was an attempt to correct the negative experiences of the past decades, with regard to national problems, and to give a frame to the aspirations of the Yugoslav nations, so far as possible. Six federal republics with state attributes and two autonomous regions (Kosovo, and Metohija and Vojvodina) with broad attributes of self-government were supposed to temper the nationalist passions of the past decades.

After World War II a phase of almost fifty years of peace came, along with remarkable social and economic progress. Throughout this period Serbian historiography could finally begin serious scientific research on the turbulent events of Serbian/Yugoslav history – with a broader human and material base, but also with appreciable ideological and political restrictions. The venerated Serbian historian Sima Ćirković once said that history is the cultural form through which each nation can reconcile itself with its past. Judging from Yugoslav historians' activities in this period, it seems that they finally decided to put this idea into practice. Support for historical research was notably increased by founding new universities and institutes of historical research, by promoting scientific publications and improving historians' education and training. The publication of historical documents was entrusted to scientific institutions – although their achievements in this field are still insufficient, even today.

The historiography of this era had several main characteristics. The subject matter considered important was the history of the Yugoslav nations (Macedonians, Muslims were treated as young nations) and national minorities, regarded as the creators of a common history of the Yugoslav region. The other fundamental topics were the history of labour and the socialist movement alongside the history of the national liberation movement and socialist revolution in the period 1914-1945. Both topics were considered to form the ideological base of the post-war Yugoslav socialist regime. Around those points, politics and historiography interfaced with each other on several levels, from lower school education to the creation of future policy and ideological premises among the highest ranks of the party and the state. The decades from the Balkan Wars until World War II received close attention from historians. Even though these matters

were observed from the perspective of socialist ideology, the research yielded notable scientific results.

In addition to these highlights, historians retained their interest for topics of medieval Serbian history (now with broader attention for Yugoslav relations) and for the 19th century. Moreover research expanded to the areas and historical periods that had been covered less in the past: the ancient history of the Yugoslav territories, archaeology, numismatics, economic and demographic history, methodology of history, the cultural history of Yugoslav nations, etc. Many bibliographical publications were issued; in this era there appeared studies and books dedicated to the history of churches, but still in insufficient number. The horizons of Serbian historiography expanded significantly to include the history of the USA, the USSR and the European states, mostly through translations of well known foreign historiographical works.

A valuable historiographical work and, we could say, a historical achievement of this era was the publication of the *History of Yugoslav Nations*, written by the most respected Yugoslav historians (about 40 of them)⁵. This was the first detailed, well structured, history of Yugoslav nations with multiple viewpoints and scientific ambitions that furnished the history of Yugoslav territories from the very beginnings of historical times to 1945, stressing both individual histories of the five Yugoslav nations and their relations throughout the past. The aim of “correcting the idealistic and chauvinistic miscarriages” of previous historiography was emphasized by editors. More attention than in previous historiography was dedicated to cultural and economic history and to historical sources and literature. According to the plans of the editors, the entire series should have been published by 1956. But once again, politics and national had their impact on historiography, and the second (and the last) book, covering the period from the 16th to the 18th century, was published only in 1960. In the last days of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia Milorad Ekmečić published the book *The Formation of Yugoslavia 1790-1918*⁶. That book could be considered as a kind of resumption of the former project, but written following a different concept. There has been only one other serious attempt at giving an overview of Yugoslav history from ancient times to 1945, published in 1973⁷. Along with the short but informative content comes the socialist ideological perspective, particularly in the chapters related to the 19th and the 20th century.

The most far-reaching achievement of Serbian historiography up to the present is *The History of the Serbian Nation* (I-VI, 10 volumes) written by highly esteemed Serbian historians in the 1980s. With respect to these results, even today, there are certain unexpected deficiencies in Serbian historiography – which perhaps can be explained by the excess of turbulent events in recent and earlier history, as well as with the political implications that might be triggered by historical research. For instance, Serbian historiography has dealt to an inadequate degree with the history of states where the Serbs lived for centuries, as well as with the history of nations with whom the Serbs had lively relations over a long historical period. These remarks take on their full significance if we realise that there are no histories of the Ottoman or Habsburg Empire written by Serbian historians, that we do not have histories of Austria, Bulgaria, Rumania, Czechs,

Italy, Greece, Albanians, Croats or Slovenians; and a history of Hungary was, for the first time, published three years ago. Events, processes or historical characters related to histories of these nations or states come within the range of Serbian historiography in connection with medieval and contemporary Serbian history and they are mostly explained from the Serbian point of view.

Moreover, until few years ago Serbian readers could not find a single book about the history of the Balkans in their own language. The first reviews of Balkan history in the Serbian language are translations of books written by historians living abroad and published in English: professors Trajan Stojanović and Stevan Pavlović.

Alongside the mentioned lacunae, we must stress that even now the history of Serbs under Ottoman rule (especially from 1459 to 1790) is not very amply examined and that there is really a very small number of published historical documents from that period and from Turkish archives. In addition to all of this, let us point out that generally there are not enough historical handbooks for scholars, students or researchers for example; nor is there a chronology of Serbian history or that of other South-Slav nations. In these circumstances, the general level of knowledge concerning the history of the Balkans and the history of Middle Europe is lower than we could expect, even among the educated.

The disintegration of former Yugoslavia and the fall of Tito's socialist regime, with its multiple political, cultural and social effects, caused a crisis of Serbian historiography in the last fifteen years of the 20th century. In reality, as it had now been relieved of the burden of Tito's regime one would have expected it to flourish, but under the pressure of the complex and violent events of war, Serbian historiography suffered from the harmful influence of the nationalist political and cultural objectives of Milošević's era and fell into a crisis.

In that period, while the previous scientific, ethnic and social criteria were fading, for a while there was a bit of uncertainty and confusion among Serbian historians when they came to interpret present events, as well as when they wished to revalorise the historical past and previous results of historiography. Once again the nation and the national history became the main measure of value, so historical research and interpretation of the past events drifted away from the South Slav context and back to the national one, from a common past to a specific past, from an international to a national context. Those changes caused a revalorisation of the politics of South Slav unification in the second half of the 19th and the first decades of the 20th centuries. Serbian historians mostly supported the idea that it was harmful for the Serbian nation and they preferred the vision of a broadened Serbian national-state.

With the calming of the tensions between the Balkan states involved in the events of the last fifteen years, historians are becoming more reasonable too. Recently the number of historically inadequate studies and books has decreased. It seems that Serbian historiography is slowly finding its way out of its crisis (in this process the financial, educational and scientific programs provided by European Union and the United States of America have an important role, as do the activities of non-governmental organizations).

The variety of research subjects is getting broader; the topics are becoming more specific and focused on the 'missing' areas of Serbian historiography; the number of books written from the regional or European viewpoint has increased and emancipation from ideology is notable too. Supported by a relatively large number of universities, historical institutes and periodical publications, by record offices, museums and a considerable number of trained historians – one has the impression that with better organization and secure financing, Serbian historiography could enter one of its brighter periods – supposing that the present transformations of the state, in the healing process which has just begun, will not end in collapse.

EPILOGUE

In the end, we may conclude with several considerations. First, there is a firm correlation between the transformations of the Serbian state and Serbian historiography from its very beginning until today. During the relatively short existence of a medieval Serbian state the first works of historiographical character or that used historiographical data – such as hagiographies, chronicles, annals and eulogies – appeared. Parallel to the fall of Serbian state and the coming of Turkish rule Serbian historiography vanished for almost three centuries.

The rebirth of Serbian historiography is connected with the Great Migration of Serbs into Hungary, i.e. the Habsburg monarchy in 1690. In their new homeland Serbs found themselves in a political, social and cultural environment that stimulated their cultural and political activity.

According to the tradition of Austro-Turkish conflict, in this early phase of development Serbian historians considered possible the creation of some sort of Southern Slavic state in connection with the Habsburg monarchy. After the Serbian uprisings they abandoned that idea and gradually accepted the concept of trying to free the Serbs under foreign authorities and forming a strong, centralized national state with broadly extended borders by means of Serbian state politics. This plan partly coincides with the concept of the Illyrian Movement promoted by Croat liberal politicians from the 1830s. Yet, for the Serbian political and intellectual elite the main goal was to unify the Serbs and strengthen their own state, not to create a Southern Slav state in the framework of Serbian-Croatian political collaboration.

In this era, national emancipation and liberation had the highest priority for all Serbs irrespective of the state to which they belonged. Accordingly, Serbian historiography, until the last decades of the 19th century, was dedicated first and foremost to the goals of a national renaissance and the formation of a Serbian state – so Serbian historiography was characterized by national romanticism, not by a scientific approach. Only after Serbian independence was obtained in 1878, and the Serbian state consolidated, could Serbian historiography enter an era of steady progress in which the bases of scientific historiography research were laid down.

That period was ended not for professional historiographical reasons, but under the pressure of state politics and the transformation of Serbian state to a Yugoslav state after Balkan Wars and World War I. The turbulent events of the 20th century, the uncertainties of Yugoslav relations and Yugoslav unification, as well as the contradictions of the socialist era, halted the straightforward development of Serbian historiography for decades. Its goals, methods, interpretations and fields of interest were seriously influenced by actual state transformations and ideologies. In addition it seems that the events of the 20th century acquired such dynamics and intensity that they were beyond what Serbian historiography was able to investigate, process and interpret. For these reasons Serbian historiography has several serious lacunae: above all a lack of published historical sources and adequate research on the Turkish period; the history of the 20th century is insufficiently explained, especially the period after World War II.

Yet, as we have seen above, even under the difficult circumstances we have mentioned, Serbian historiography has experienced significant progress – and if it is to enjoy a longer period of in a stable political environment it will be able to enjoy a new phase of progress.

NOTES

- ¹ Those works are: N. Radojčić, *Moderna srpska istoriografija*, "Letopis Matice srpske", 313, 1929, 14, pp. 39-53 and E. Niederhauser, *A szerb történetírás*, in *A történetírás története Kelet-Európában*, Budapest 1995, pp. 422-490.
- ² M. Mirković, *Pravoslavna crkva u Srba na njihovom putu od naroda do nacije*, in *Postanak i razvoj srpske nacije (Neki metodološko-teorijski problemi u izučavanju nastanka i razvitka srpske nacije)*, Belgrade 1979.
- ³ *Л.Радюш, Историја српске државности*, II volume: *Србија и Црна Гора*, Novi Sad 2001, pp. 119-120.
- ⁴ In political thought of that period precisely the word 'tribe' (in Serbo-Croat language: *pleme*) was used. The essence of this idea was that Serbs, Croats and Slovenians are three south Slav tribes that – on the basis of the similarity of their language, origin and culture – compose one nation regardless of their different political histories.
- ⁵ B. Grafenauer - D.Perović - J.Šidak (eds.), *Istorija naroda Jugoslavije*, Belgrade 1953.
- ⁶ M. Ekmečić, *Stvaranje Jugoslavije 1790-1918*, 1-2, Belgrade 1989.
- ⁷ I. Božić - S.Čirković - M.Ekmečić - V.Dedijer, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, Belgrade 1973.
- ⁸ *Istorija srpskog naroda*, I-VI, Belgrade 1981-1993.

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