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## IN MEMORIAM



**Mihailo Vojvodić**  
(1938–2025)

Mihailo Vojvodić was a distinguished scholar and dedicated academic. Professor Vojvodić's research focused on what is perhaps the most intriguing period in the modern history of Serbia: the age in which the Serbian national identity was forged in the modern sense (from 1878 to 1914). During his long career, he sought to unravel the intricacies of the foreign policy aspect of this process, in which Serbia's independence, as established at the Congress of Vienna, set the stage for the development of its institutions, civil society, military and, most significantly, the transformation of the Serbian peasantry into citizens and conscripts of the Serbian state who wholeheartedly embraced the objectives of the Serbian nation.

Professor Vojvodić's academic journey, which led him to the study of the diplomatic, political and cultural history of Serbia at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,

commenced in his native Cetinje, where he was born in 1938 and completed secondary education in 1956. In the same year, he enrolled at the Department of History at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, from which he graduated in 1960. A year later, he became a teaching assistant at the Department for History and began his postgraduate studies, acquiring a Master's degree in 1964. He pursued postgraduate studies in France during the 1964/1965 academic year. He obtained his PhD from the University of Belgrade in 1966. The following year, he became an active member of the History of Modern Europe Department at the School of History under the supervision of his mentors, professors Vasa Čubrilović and Jorjo Tadić, along with his older colleague, Professor Radovan Samardžić, and his colleagues Dragoljub Živojinović and Andrej Mitrović. His academic career followed the established path, and he became a full professor at the School of History in 1980.

His PhD thesis, which focused on the so-called Skadar Crisis<sup>1</sup>—the conflict between Montenegro and Serbia on the one hand, and Italy and Austria-Hungary, the protectors of the nascent Albanian state, on the other—over control of the town of Skadar, outlined the first main topic of his research. The geopolitics of the Balkans on the eve of the Great War created the foreign policy context in which the two Serbian states had to operate in their quest to liberate the region from Ottoman rule. Professor Vojvodić wrote about the diplomatic history of Serbia and Montenegro's relations with the great powers of the early 20th century, focusing on the two major issues: the Annexation of Bosnia in 1908 and the First Balkan War of 1912. He also edited and published the relevant volumes of Documents on Serbia's Foreign Policy.<sup>2</sup>

Professor Vojvodić was also interested in the evolution of the struggle that led to the liberation of the Balkans from Ottoman rule during the Balkan Wars. In the last decades of the 19th century, the history of the Balkans was marked by a status quo backed by the two major regional powers, Russia and Austria-Hungary. This made it virtually impossible for the Balkan nations to challenge Ottoman rule. The interplay of diplomatic and cultural initiatives in favour of Serbs living in the Ottoman Empire formed the focus of Professor Vojvodić's research, as presented in his seminal work on Serbia's foreign policy

<sup>1</sup> M. Vojvodić, *Skadarska kriza 1913. godine* [The Skadar Crisis of 1913] (Belgrade: Zavod za izdavanje udžbenika Socijalističke Republike Srbije, 1970).

<sup>2</sup> *Dokumenti o spoljnoj politici Kraljevine Srbije: 1903–1914* [Documents on the Foreign Policy of the Kingdom of Serbia: 1903–1914], knjiga 5 (1–3), 1/14. januar – 31. decembar 1912/13. januar 1913 (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1984–1986); *Dokumenti o spoljnoj politici Kraljevine Srbije: 1903–1914* [Documents on the Foreign Policy of the Kingdom of Serbia: 1903–1914], knjiga 3 (1–5), 1/14. januar 1908 – 31. decembar 1909/13. januar 1910. godine iz fondova Arhiva Srbije (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2010–2014).

at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> In this study, he identified Stojan Novaković, a historian, diplomat and politician, as the driving force behind the new Serbian strategy of cultural initiative based on good relations with the Ottoman Empire. Professor Vojvodić dedicated several books to Novaković's efforts and edited his principal works for publication.<sup>4</sup> In a series of articles on the history of Serbs living in the Ottoman Empire, Professor Vojvodić focused on Serbian communities in the Vilayet of Kosovo. The history of relations between Serbia and Montenegro after the Great Eastern Crisis of 1875–1878 was also one of Professor Vojvodić's favourite topics, leading him to examine the relations between the two Serbian states and the Great Powers.

Professor Vojvodić taught History of Europe in the 19th century at the Department of History, chairing the department from 1988 to 1990 and serving as Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy from 1998 to 2000 during particularly challenging times. Professor Vojvodić had to deal with the reaction of the faculty to a newly promulgated law that limited university autonomy. Teaching staff were required to sign new employment contracts, thereby implicitly accepting the new law, while refusal meant losing their jobs. He took a public stand against this, stating that if any faculty members were to be fired, he would be the first to go. He retired in 2006, respected by his peers and acclaimed by his students. Besides the University of Belgrade, he also taught at the University of Banja Luka and the University of East Sarajevo.

Professor Vojvodić was made a corresponding member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA) in 2009, becoming a full member in 2015. This marked a new chapter in his academic career. He played an active role in a series of research initiatives organised by the Academy, including hosting conferences on the Balkan Wars and the Great War. He was a member of multiple SASA committees: the Vardar Committee; the Committee for the History of Serbia in the 19th Century; the Committee for the History of the 20th Century; the Committee for the Study of the Origin of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1914–1918); and the Committee for the History of Serbian–Russian Relations. He was President of the Committee for the Study

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<sup>3</sup> M. Vojvodić, *Srbija u međunarodnim odnosima krajem XIX i početkom XX veka* [Serbia in International Relations at the End of the 19th and Beginning of the 20th Century] (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1988).

<sup>4</sup> M. Vojvodić, *Petrogradske godine Stojana Novakovića, 1900–1905* [St. Petersburg Years of Stojan Novaković, 1900–1905] (Belgrade: Istorijski institut, 2009); M. Vojvodić, *Stojan Novaković: u službi nacionalnih i državnih interesa* [Stojan Novaković: in the Service of National and State Interests] (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 2012); M. Vojvodić, *Samo svojim putem: Stojan Novaković u skupštinskom i javnom životu Srbije: 1905–1915* [Along His Own Path: Stojan Novaković in the Parliamentary and Public Life of Serbia: 1905–1915] (Belgrade: Filip Višnjić, 2015).

of Kosovo and Metohija. He was also editor-in-chief of two SASA journals: *Kosovsko-metohijski zbornik / Recueil de Kosovo et Metohija* and *Glas odeljenja istorijskih nauka / Glas - Classe des sciences historiques*.

Vojvodić served as Secretary of the Department of Historical Sciences at the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (2016–2024), a member of the Board of Directors of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts Fund, and a member of the Presidency of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (2016–2024). From 2014, he was a member of the Board of Directors of the Institute for Balkan Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences, chairing it from 2017 until his passing. During his tenure as President of the Board of Directors of the Institute for Balkan Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences, he provided wholehearted support and academic guidance, which was of crucial importance when the Institute participated in multiple national and international projects and maintained an active publishing schedule.

Professor Vojvodić will be remembered by his colleagues and students as a devoted and thoughtful academic who always made time for others. At the Archives of Serbia and the Department of History at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, he mentored generations of students researching the history of Serbia and Europe from the French Revolution to the end of the First World War. He was a renowned expert for the period from the Great Eastern Crisis to the Great War. Above all, he was a warm and kind person who was attentive to others and always ready to support his colleagues and students.

Vojislav G. Pavlović

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