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THE SERBS AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR 1914–1918, ED. DRAGOLJUB R. ŽIVOJINOVIĆ.
BELGRADE: SERBIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS, 2015, 474 p.

*Reviewed by Dušan Fundić**

The book *The Serbs and the First World War 1914–1918* edited by Dragoljub R. Živojinović, one in the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts Department of Historical Sciences Series, is the proceedings of the International Conference held in Belgrade, 13–15 June 2014. During this three-day conference papers were presented by participants from several countries, including Serbia, Greece, Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, France, the United Kingdom and Russia. As stated in the opening address by Dragoljub R. Živojinović, the main goal of the conference was to “study the place and role of the Kingdom of Serbia and the Serbian people in general in the Great War”.

The book assembles articles by thirty-four authors organized in the order of their presentation at the conference, but they will be reviewed here grouped in three blocks according to their related subject matter. The first group of texts deals with a number of particular issues concerning Serbian history during the First World War.

Milorad Ekmečić offers a new reading of Renouvin’s “triple conspiracy” and seeks to trace the motives of Young Bosnians for organizing the Sarajevo assassination. According to his interpretation, one of its causes was an organized colonization of Bosnia and Herzegovina with settlers from Austria and Galicia. This colonization went hand in hand with the steady emigration of Muslim population, which threatened to change the status of native local inhabitants.

In his text “The Serbs in Hungary during the First World War” Vasilije Dj. Krestić describes the situation of the Serbian population in Austria-Hungary, including mass deportations to concentration camps in Hungary. He analyses the question of Austro-Hungarian army deserters of Serbian origin as well as the role of the Serbian elite in the process of taking over of power in the last days of the war. Special attention is paid to the status of labour force and food shortages in southern Hungary during the war.

Mihailo Vojvodić analyses the work of the Serbian parliament and the stances of its members on Austro-Hungarian pre-1914 policy towards Serbia. Basing his contribution on the minutes of parliamentary sessions, he draws the conclusion that Serbian MPs believed that Austria-Hungary had imposed a life or death struggle on Serbia by annexing Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908.

Nikola B. Popović’s contribution on “The Triple Entente and the idea of ‘Greater Serbia’ during the First World War” concludes that Serbia’s goal was a unified South-Slav state, as laid out in the Niš Declaration of 7 December 1914, whereas the Entente, interested in attracting Bulgaria as an ally, considered the post-war creation of an enlarged, “Greater Serbia”.

In his article “Young Bosnia and the ‘Black Hand’” Dušan T. Bataković explores entangled relations between the two

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organizations, emphasizing the role of the Black Hand leader Dragutin Dimitrijević Apis. Bataković concludes that Young Bosnia arose in resistance to Austro-Hungarian colonial rule over Bosnia and Herzegovina, and offers a new interpretation of its relationship with the Black Hand. Young Bosnia members were not a mere tool in the hands of the Black Hand but an active force which acted on its own agenda.

Draga Mastilović contributes a paper on Muslim youth in the Young Bosnia organization who were Serb nationalists, most notable of them being among the conspirators in the Sarajevo assassination, including the most prominent of them, Muhamed Mehmedbašić. During the war, many young Muslims fell victim to Austro-Hungarian persecutions.

The life and work of Jovan M. Jovanović, a Serbian diplomat and politician, is presented by Mira Radojević. During the 1920s and 1930s Jovanović wrote and published books and articles on the Serbian role in the outbreak of the war. The most remarkable in his writings is the explanation of his warning to Minister Bilinski prior to the Sarajevo assassination. The paper also offers examples of some of the earlier "war guilt" debates and allegations.

Radoslav Raspopović explores the question of Russian military aid to Montenegro, and its effect on Montenegrin foreign policy decisions. The aid that kept coming in throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was ceased in September 1912 due to Montenegro's secret alliance with Serbia and Bulgaria, which effectively crippled the political ambitions of its elites.

In her article "The Serbian Orthodox Church in the First World War" Radmila Radić gives an overview of the dioceses of the local Orthodox churches that would become part of a unified Serbian Orthodox Church after the war. She also analyses the available data in an attempt to establish the number of war victims among Orthodox clerics and monastics. She finds that some

fifty percent of them suffered considerably during the war which, in the worst cases, meant being murdered or deported to concentration camps.

The focus of a second group of articles is on mutual influences and relations between Serbia, its neighbours and the great powers. Various aspects of the issues concerning Austria-Hungary are covered by several contributors.

Lothar Höbel's text devoted to the question why Austria-Hungary started the war suggests that the Austrian army's mobilizations as a form of threat were too costly and could not go on indefinitely. Therefore, the first mobilization after the Balkan Wars would have necessarily meant war. Höbel also concludes that the real reason for war was not Serbia's action in the southern provinces of Austria-Hungary but the prospect of an anti-Monarchy oriented Balkan league.

Václav Štěpánek describes failed attempts to improve relations between Serbia and Austria-Hungary through the mediation of members of the Austrian parliament, Josef Redlich, Karel Kramář and Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. The author focuses on a missed opportunity to arrange a Berchtold-Pašić meeting. The meeting eventually did take place but in different circumstances and when there was no more chance for peace.

Aleksandar Životić's contribution on "The Austro-Hungarian war crimes in Serbia in 1914" is based on various sources of Serbian origin. He analyzes the crimes committed against military officials, prisoners of war and civilians, concluding that those were not randomly committed crimes but an organized and premeditated undertaking.

The book *Österreich-Ungarn und die Balkanländer mit besonderer Rücksicht auf okkupierte Serbien* by Lajos Thalloczy, the Hungarian historian who served as deputy governor in occupied Serbia, is the object of Vladimir Stojančević's analysis. Thalloczy wrote the book for a pedagogical course which was to be held in Belgrade with the purpose of re-educating the Serbian

population on the falsehood of "Greater Serbian propaganda".

The text co-authored by Árpád Hornyák and László Szarka reveals the views of Hungarian Prime Minister István Tisza on the place of Serbia in an Austria-Hungary-dominated Southeast Europe. They look at the evolution of Hungarian war aims during the war, which were based on the preservation of Hungary's territorial integrity and influence within the Monarchy. In addition, one more important aspect was to maintain presence and influence in occupied Serbia through Lajos Thälköczy.

The role of Germany, the most powerful member of the Triple Alliance, is addressed by the articles of John Röhl and Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann. Röhl investigates German support to Austria-Hungary in July 1914. The German geopolitical decision not to allow the weakening of its ally resulted in its support to the Danubian Monarchy's intention to "punish" Serbia and quash its political influence. Through an analysis of the decision-making process, especially that of German Chancellor Theobald Bethmann Hollweg, Röhl depicts the road travelled to Germany's giving the blank cheque to Austria-Hungary to start the war. On the other hand, Strandmann looks at the early war aims in terms of political, territorial and economic ambitions, concluding that the German Empire did not fight a defensive war, but sought to achieve a hegemonic position in the European system of states.

The contributions of Holger Afflerbach and Massimo Bucarelli deal with two aspects of Italy's politics before and during the First World War. Afflerbach analyses the Italian decision not to enter the war in 1914. Without having been consulted by the allies, the Italian ruling circles had no intention of providing support to Austrian Balkan imperialism without compensation, and the Italian public was staunchly opposed to the war. Moreover, the Kingdom of Italy had a strong interest in preserving an influential Serbian state as a counterweight to

Austro-Hungarian hegemony in the region. Massimo Bucarelli argues that relations between Italy and Serbia during the First World War were affected by the Serbian government's decision to pursue the Yugoslav programme by supporting Croatian and Slovenian pretensions to all of Dalmatia and Istria, which caused a great rift between the two countries.

One of the members of the Entente, France, had a very important role in various aspects that were of interest to Serbia in the First World War, which is the topic discussed by Georges-Henry Soutou. Soutou believes that the unification of Yugoslavs defined as a Serbian war aim was not a priority for the French government until the shift in its policy towards Austria-Hungary. At the instigation of the United States, the French government recognized the Czechoslovak state on 3 June 1918. This recognition paved the way for acknowledging the Yugoslav programme, albeit again delayed due to Clemenceau's plan for a Franco-Italian alliance.

Jean-Paul Bled examines the writing of *La Revue des Deux Mondes* about Serbia during 1915. Its editor Francis Charmes celebrated Serbian victories in 1914. The magazine itself is important because it reflected the views of the French Foreign Ministry. In the course of 1915 Charmes argued that it would not be easy to convince Serbia to cede some of its territory in Macedonia to Bulgaria in order for the latter to be attracted to join the Entente bloc if Bosnia and Herzegovina was the only compensation to offer to Serbia because of the negotiations with Italy. Consequently, Bulgaria's attack on Serbia did not come as a surprise to him.

Frédéric Guelton presents "Papiers Fournier", the legacy of Colonel Pierre Fournier, the French military attaché in Serbia (1912–1916), which consists of 800 pages of telegrams and official reports. Fournier left important testimony on the military operations and Serbian victories at the battles of Cer and the Kolubara. Focusing on the period from July to December

1914, Guelton writes about the shortage of weapons and ammunition suffered by the Serbian army, but also about its impressive victories.

Looking at the Serbian defeat in 1915 and the exodus of its army and civilian population, Frédéric Le Moal analyses French support to the transportation of Serbian troops to the Greek island of Corfu as a founding moment of Franco-Serbian friendship. In subsequent decades the ties of friendship were strengthened by the creation of shared memory symbolized by the erection of a monument in honour of France in Belgrade in 1930.

In his article on Franco-Serbian relations from the perspective of the creation of Yugoslavia, Vojislav G. Pavlović makes an argument that the Serbian government's Yugoslav programme became a realistic prospect only after the breakthrough made on the Salonika (Macedonian) front in September 1918. French Prime Minister Clemenceau, however, refused to support the creation of a South-Slavic state because he had obligations towards the Italian ally which harboured ambitions to control both Adriatic coasts. An affirmative answer from France came only because its government had no viable solution to the problem of the power vacuum that had been left by the dissolution of Austria-Hungary.

Russia's support to Serbia in July 1914 is presented by Elena G. Kostrikova. She looks at several failed attempts of the Russian government to prevent the Austro-Hungarian attack on Serbia, and points to widespread expressions of popular solidarity with the Serbs across the Russian Empire.

Miloš Ković looks into Great Britain's attempt to localize the conflict in the Balkans made on 29–30 July 1914. He describes the events surrounding the diplomatic initiative of Sir Edward Grey, British Foreign Secretary, known as "Halt in Belgrad": Austria-Hungary would occupy Belgrade, Serbia would meet the demands of four great powers, Britain, France, Germany and Italy,

and then the Dual Monarchy would withdraw. As a result of German decision not to cooperate with British diplomacy, Grey's initiative turned into a desperate attempt to repeat the diplomatic successes of 1913.

In his text "Aspects of Greek-Serbian relations in 1914 and the image of the Serbs in the Greek press", Spyridon Sfetas examines the conflict between Prime Minister Venizelos and King Constantine over whether Greece should enter the war on the side of the Entente or whether it should help Serbia only in the event of a Bulgarian attack, and suggests that Greece had less and less doubts about the issue after the battles of Cer and the Kolubara.

Dragoljub R. Živojinović discusses the stance of US President Woodrow Wilson on the issue of Austro-Hungarian responsibility for the outbreak of the war. In Wilson's opinion, there had been no reason for Austria-Hungary to feel threatened by a country as small as Serbia, and he intimately believed that the Double Monarchy had been the main culprit for the outbreak of the war.

A third group of contributions is devoted to various historiographical topics and to the question of the responsibility for the outbreak of the war. Slobodan G. Marković contributes an article devoted to the question of Serbian losses in the First World War. While Western specialists have estimated the losses at about 800,000 persons (16–17 % of the total population), two official Serbian estimates produced in 1919 are 1 and 1.25 million people respectively. Given the estimated total population of Serbia of 4.9 million in July 1914, as compared to 3.87 million in January 1921, the war losses are within the range of 1 to 1.3 million, or 21 % to 27.6 %, which confirms the generally accepted belief that Serbia lost a quarter of its population in the First World War.

Ljubodrag Dimić identifies several phases in the historiography on the First World War produced by Serbian historians, tracing the road travelled from works based

on memories of war participants and propaganda material to a critical, scholarly approach to various types of historical sources. Dimić offers an analysis of the changing attitude towards the legacy of the Great War over time: from the period of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the new post-1945 socialist country to the latest trends in Serbian historiography.

The main trends in Russian historiography on the great powers' Balkan policies in 1914 are explained by Viacheslav Shatsillo, who suggests that during the Soviet period the assessment of the role of Serbia in the July crisis depended on the state of Yugoslav-Soviet relations.

Mile Bjelajac's contribution is devoted to the analysis of the most recent revisionist trends in interpreting the origins of the First World War. Bjelajac quotes numerous recent works to demonstrate that the revisionist authors rejecting Fischer's arguments advanced in the 1960s seek to formulate a new agenda: that the guilt for the outbreak of the war lies equally with all participants in the war. But, as Bjelajac's analysis shows, instead of developing a line of argument to support such claims, Serbia and Russia are simply denounced as the main culprits for the war.

Aleksandar Rastović shows that the debate on the responsibility for the war has in fact never ceased, being rekindled particularly at the time of severe political crises such as those of the 1920s and 1930s. Rastović focuses on one of the earliest public polemics, the one between Mary Edit Durham and Robert William Seaton-Watson which began in 1920 and lasted almost a decade. Whereas Durham claimed that the Serbian government had not only known about but in fact organized the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Seaton-Watson rejected such claims and eventually published a book exonerating the Serbian government of any blame.

Čedomir Antić gives an analysis of recently advanced interpretations of Serbia's

alleged responsibility for the outbreak of the Great War. Identifying three moments of shift in interpretation in a process whose dynamics depended on political motives and cultural differences, he suggests that those shifts occurred at first almost immediately after the war, in the 1920s, then after 1989 and the end of the Cold War, and finally, during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, paving the way for the newest interpretations put forth shortly before the centenary of the outbreak of the war.

The Serbs and the First World War 1914–1918 explores the effects of the First World War on the Serb-inhabited lands from various viewpoints, focusing predominately on the dynamics between the Serbian state and the policies of the great powers. It covers a broad range of topics, from the origins of the war and the July crisis to the Paris Peace Conference, from political, cultural and diplomatic aspects of the war to the latest trends in the historiography of the First World War. What adds further quality to the book ensuring diversity of its contents is the presence of authors from various countries.