

UDC 930.85(4–12)

ISSN 0350–7653

SERBIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS
INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES

BALCANICA

XLIV

ANNUAL OF THE INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES

Editor

DUŠAN T. BATAKOVIĆ

Director of the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA

Editorial Board

FRANCIS CONTE (Paris), DJORDJE S. KOSTIĆ, LJUBOMIR MAKSIMOVIĆ,
DANICA POPOVIĆ, GABRIELLA SCHUBERT (Jena), BILJANA SIKIMIĆ,
ANTHONY-EMIL TACHIAOS (Thessaloniki), NIKOLA TASIĆ,
SVETLANA M. TOLSTAJA (Moscow)

BELGRADE

2013



seems to underrate what the British saw as Maček's blackmailing tactics and the difficulties in which Prince Paul found himself. The deal was finally struck on 26 August 1939: the ethnic-based *Banovina* of Croatia, unlike King Alexander's *banovinas*, was formed the territorial scope of which exceeded that of the Habsburg historic or, for that matter, today's Croatia. Djokić describes the situation in the newly-created Croatian *banovina* marked by a number of violent incidents in which Serbs and pro-Yugoslav Croats were victims. Yet, he tries to argue that these conflicts were "in many aspects personal and ideological, not necessarily 'ethnic'" (pp. 217–218). Djokić focuses on the town of Split to prove his point and stresses how the local branch of the CPP split into a number of mutually hostile factions (pp. 220–222) and the conflict arose as much among Croats as between Croats and Serbs. But from the evidence he quotes it is clear that these realignments among Croats were caused purely by hunger for power, not by any ideological reasons or different attitude towards local Serbs. Similarly, he argues that the demand of Serbs from the Croatian town of Vukovar to have their district transferred "to the jurisdiction of the Dunavska *banovina*" was some "local goal" (p. 242), although it was no doubt motivated by their wish to be excluded from the scope of Croatian *banovina*.

The 1939 *Sporazum* did not settle down the heated atmosphere in Yugoslavia since it was incomplete. It marked the beginning of the federalisation of the country, but that process was never completed. Djokić provides an excellent overview of the political confusion that engulfed the Serbs who did not receive their own ethnic *banovina* – just like the Slovenes – which provoked the "Serbs, rally together" movement. The status of Bosnia was also an open question. The author seems to display certain dissatisfaction with the 1939 agreement on account of its failure to bring about a return to democracy, but still maintains that it "marked a positive step toward finding a Serb-Croat compromise" (p. 268). It was the Axis aggression, and not domestic instability, that liquidated Yugoslavia in April 1941. Djokić briefly sketches these events but not without some highly contentious assertions, such as his endorsement of the 27 March military coup and Anthony Eden's allegedly prophetic advice to Prince Paul, as well as his speculation on what might have befallen Yugoslavia had she survived the war intact.

Overall, Djokić has produced a thoroughly researched, well-written and somewhat contentious book which will be a mandatory reading for any student of Serb-Croat relations in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

ZORAN MILUTINOVIĆ, *GETTING OVER EUROPE. THE CONSTRUCTION OF EUROPE IN SERBIAN CULTURE* (STUDIA IMAGOLOGICA SERIES). AMSTERDAM – NEW YORK: RODOPI, 2011, pp. 288.

Reviewed by Veljko Stanić*

A study on the images of Europe in the Serbian culture of the first half of the twentieth century by Zoran Milutinović appeared as the eighteenth volume in the Amsterdam-based Rodopi publisher's

Studia Imagologica series. Milutinović, professor of South-Slavic literature and literary theory at the School of Slavon-

* Institute for Balkan Studies, Belgrade

ic & East European Studies, University College of London, is a specialist in comparative literature and drama theory. In addressing such a complex subject he chose to examine literary, scholarly and philosophical texts, travel accounts and essays of some fifteen Serbian authors of the first half of the last century. Even though some of the studies included in the book had been published independently, the book can be read as a monograph in its own right. The adept selection of representative examples is a very welcome contribution to the cultural and intellectual history of modern Serbia.

The book before us calls to mind the thought of the French historian Christophe Charle that every cultural history is comparative, since cultures, especially in contemporary times, measure themselves against each other, and not only “small” cultures against greater, “dominant [cultures] which have universalist pretensions”. Milutinović starts from a similar premise in his attempt to define the place of Serbian culture against or, more precisely, within European culture. Focused on the period between the two world wars, marked by fundamental uncertainties about the fate of Europe and its civilisation, he in fact encompasses a longer period, the decades between the beginning of the twentieth century and the end of the Second World War. At the beginning of that road stands Jovan Skerlić, a man of the nineteenth century in many respects, with his unwavering faith in the rationalism of the West. The road ends with the most mature of Ivo Andrić’s works, *The Bridge on the Drina* and *Bosnian [Travnik] Chronicle*, where the notions of East and West, Europe and the Balkans, are sublimated and “got over” in the author’s philosophy of history. During the few decades between these two milestones, the Europe issue features in the mainstream of Serbian culture. The First World War marks a tectonic politi-

cal and cultural shift which, as in other European societies, decisively influences the process of stratification and ideological differentiation within the Serbian intellectual elite, and the image it constructs of itself and of others.

Milutinović’s study, while recognising the diversity and complexity of the images of Europe in Serbian culture, essentially reveals the notion of Europe as necessarily dual, contradictory and ambivalent, as “an illness and a cure”. At the same time, however, he suggests that the dialogue of Serbian culture with Europe is an irreversible process with lasting and far-reaching effects. From looking up to Europe to questioning it, from the Europe of materialism, technological progress and modernisation to the Europe of spiritual, cultural values, the faces of Europe are examined thoroughly in the writings of Serbian intellectuals. One pole in writing about Europe is predicated on rationalism and strives for the incorporation of Serbian culture in the European mainstream. It naturally relies on Serbia’s nineteenth-century development, combining the national idea and the liberal political stream of developed European nations. Speaking of pre-1914 Serbia, Milutinović therefore refers to Predrag Palavestra’s arguments for describing it as a “golden age” of Serbian culture, with “constitutional monarchy, liberal parliamentary democracy, open borders, freedom of the press, and prevalent French cultural influence” being its “main political and social features”. The First World War, however, sets the stage for a powerful surge of irrational aesthetics marked by, among other things, Expressionist poetics and Spenglerian pessimism. Therefore, in a climate of cultural internationalisation in the years following the Great War, some Serbian intellectuals are not an exception in radically redefining the image of Europe.

The *cosmopolitan nationalists*, exemplified by Jovan Skerlić and Isidora Sekulić,

continue the nineteenth-century trend of Serbia's modernisation. To them, the political, social and cultural model for Serbia to follow is Europe at its best. Skerlić, although not disinclined to criticise Europe – the Europe of empires and plutocracy – is a pronounced Westerner in Serbian culture. “The West or death” is his motto. This West of his is above all France and authentic European values such as democracy, rationalism, progress, education, energy. Skerlić's vision of Europe therefore entails a social and political modernisation of Serbia in accordance with European standards. Isidora Sekulić, despite her different literary sensibility, joins Skerlić in this respect, though in purely intellectual terms. She sees Europe as an irreplaceable canon and framework for Serbia to draw from. She develops the concept of cultural nationalism as a higher quality which would make Serbia lastingly become part of the European cultural tradition.

To the same circle of Serbian intellectuals which may tentatively be described as liberal, Milutinović adds a few more remarkable figures. The chapter *The Gentleman* acquaints us with Jovan Dučić. For Dučić, great culture is the only culture; consequently he identifies fully with French culture as an expression of Eurocentric universalism. Bogdan Popović and Slobodan Jovanović ponder on the national character of their people and its relation to Europe. While cultural deficiencies of the Serbian people are apparent to the former, the latter argues that the nation is not a value in itself but can only attain value through universal cultural ideals. There is neither a domestically devised cultural pattern, nor has one of the existing European models been adopted: the French *honnête homme*, the German *gebildeter Mensch* or the English *gentleman*. The lack of such a model has as a result the lack of national self-control, Jovanović believes. Milan Kašanin exem-

plifies an erudite Serbian intellectual, a Francophile. His vision of Europe looks up to France which, in Milutinović's view, remains “the unattainable world of culture in which one can stay for a while, admire and respect, but can never dream of recreating at home”. The Expressionist Rastko Petrović, to whom the chapter *Oh, to be a European! What did Rastko Petrović learn in Africa?* is devoted, also makes a distinction between the Europe of culture and the Europe of empires and colonies. Petrović can only see himself as an insider in the former, because European cultural identity provides him with the necessary European legitimacy. This is why he “must not let go of the idea of Europe from his Belgrade books, for if he did he would be no more than a grandson of a Sultan's subject ... for their existence is his only chance of being a European insider”.

Drifting away both from the Eurocentric perspective and from the traditional view of Europe as a desirable model, some intellectuals introduce noticeably different images of Europe in Serbian culture. To them the author devotes the chapter indicatively entitled *In search of a Slav mission*. Jovan Cvijić thinks of “larger cultural syntheses, a Yugoslav and a Slav one”, as a means of not only cultural but also political development, independent of the West. Although Miloš Crnjanski speaks of Slav barbarians and the unity of European culture, the leading role is played by proponents of the “philosophy of life” (*Lebensphilosophie*) powerfully influenced by Bergsonian intuitionism and “creative evolution”. Glorification of patriarchal culture, national and Eastern mysticism, modern European schools of philosophy, all of these are elements that mark their thought. Miloš Djurić believes in Slavdom's cultural mission; the original Yugoslav culture brings about new values as a lasting part of the world's cultural heritage. Vladimir Vujić and Prvoš Slankamenac develop a “new humanism”

and the doctrine of “liberated”, “Slavic” thought. Vladimir Dvorniković, on the other hand, although an advocate of integral Yugoslavism, does not believe in “Slav civilization or its salutary cultural mission”: “Only the West is culturally Europe. If Europeans are Hellenes, we are only Macedonians, if not barbarians.”

On the other hand, the chapter *The prophets of Europe's downfall and rebirth* contrasts Nikolaj Velimirović and Dimitrije Mitrinović. Although both have the crisis of Europe as their starting point, the former demands a radical break with Europe, while the latter sees the future in a new Europe. Milutinović stresses that Velimirović belongs “to the broad spectrum of European antimodernists”. Much like Paul Claudel or T. S. Eliot, he is a “conservative revolutionary” opposed to the secular, rationalist and individualist Europe. From being an advocate of Europe’s spiritual rebirth in Christianity in the early 1920s he becomes an opponent of all things European twenty years later. Mitrinović, on the other hand, assigns the central role in the spiritual rebirth of humanity to Europe which will unite all its cultures into one.

Two concluding chapters of the book, *The great mechanism passes through Višegrad* and *Misunderstanding is the rule, understanding is a miracle*, offer an analysis of the work of Ivo Andrić. Situating it in the centre of European literary modernism, Milutinović observes that Andrić’s understanding of modernisation is considerably different from Skerlić’s from the beginning of the century. In other words, the road travelled suggests not only positive but also “dark aspects” of the process. In the spirit of fin-de-siècle cultural pessimism, Andrić speaks of the “defeat of the substantial and consequent triumph of the structural and functional”. Also, his work provides critical insight into almost all debates about Europe conducted in the few previous decades. Milutinović there-

fore uses the example of *Bosnian Chronicle* to sum up the following elements: “the image of enlightened, benevolent and progressive Europe, which has a lot to offer to the Balkans; Europe’s imperialism and care only for its own interests; the disdain with which the Balkans were regarded in other parts of the continent; the false opposition between East and West; the class differences transformed into national differences by European observers; the cult of France; and the vision of the unity of human culture”. “Andrić deconstructs this opposition and shows that just as there are many Europes, so there are many Bosnias,” Milutinović concludes.

By acquainting the reader with the most significant images of Europe created by some of the leading Serbian intellectuals, Zoran Milutinović also offers a study on Serbia’s intellectual generations of the first half of the twentieth century, which should encourage historians to embark on a more versatile approach to Serbian cultural and intellectual history. Milutinović shows that the image of Europe has been a central question in modern Serbia’s cultural orientation, inextricably linked with her national and cultural development. Firmly holding to the imagological perspective, Milutinović also observes the inner logic of the intellectual field in Serbian culture, paradigm shifts and interdependence between different images of Europe. His view could have been even richer had he encompassed the broader, Yugoslav, field, especially in the interwar period. Still, the diversity of visions of Europe suggested by his findings may be seen as a precious intellectual legacy in Serbian culture, still relevant and inspiring almost a century after its creation.