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Introduction

The essays collected in this book seek to discern the interdependence of historical, political and cultural issues underlying the relations between the Balkan States, Austria-Hungary, Ottoman Empire, and Russia.

Images of the self and others evolve in a dialectical flux, the balance depending on multiple internal and external relations. Since the early 1980s, the cultural and the political discourse in the Balkans reflected the tensions of the increasingly bounded nations evolving in the post-communist era. The dissonance of belligerent monologues gradually obliterated the underlying counterpoint of voices aspiring for unity, equality and interdependence. Worsening of the economy and tensions in the political scene reflected the changes in European and world economic and political structures, complicating the situation even more.

Thus, I turned to the study of the nineteenth century, and to the stage called "The National Revival," trusting that the images of goodwill and collaboration still hold the best promise for the future. During the early decades of the nineteenth century, the

emerging Panslav aspirations evolved as an aspect of the Slav national revival, stressing the historical and cultural ties among the Slavs. The ensuing literary, historical, linguistic and folkloristic explorations were permeated with the pride of discovering native cultural distinctiveness. The new assessments led to a broader diachronic and synchronic reexamination of the respective national identities introducing the postulates of Panslav ideology at large.

Yet from the start many eminent Slavic scholars repeatedly asserted the resolve of their nations for self-determination and furthering of their native languages and traditions. The dominant framework of their respective deliberations recognized the principle of distinctive national differences while fostering the common goal of Slavic solidarity. The First Panslav Congress in Prague evolved as a unifying relational event aiming to stress the historical and cultural continuum of the Slavs. The Congress marked the culmination of the initial phase of cultural collaboration. The Congress issued a Manifesto to all European nations concerning the position of Slavic peoples on major issues of governance, and national rights.

It has been suggested that the study of the Eastern Question should not be limited to manifestos, diplomatic proceedings, partition proposals, and state treatises, but should devote more attention to culture, education, religion, literature, and altruistic endeavors. In this regard, the archival holdings of the *Landesregierung*-Provincial Government of Bosnia-Herzegovina in Sarajevo, and of the *Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv* in Vienna suggest a historical narrative of pointed epistemological significance documenting the cultural, social, and political situation during the Austro-Hungarian occupation of both provinces. Most of all, these documents reveal the realities of a perpetual struggle within the population demanding meaningful choices in educational, economic and governing processes enabling lives worth living.

The essays dealing with the Eastern Question were written at the time when the recent civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was replicating the Eastern Question in its current phase. The lessons that history may impart seemed to have been lost in the numerous hastily suggested assessments of the prevailing situation in the Balkans. In order to elucidate the inherent complexities of this region as well as perils of foreign interventions, I turned my attention to the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the uprising of 1875, and the subsequent occupation of the provinces.

In the aftermath of the Berlin Congress in 1878, the Austro-Hungarian Government received the mandate of the Great Powers to occupy Bosnia-Herzegovina and introduce much-needed agrarian and educational reforms in order to improve the livelihood of the population. However, the Austro-Hungarian occupation, and subsequent annexation,

did not fulfill the mandate proposed by the Berlin Congress, but aspired most of all to preserve the colonial domination of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a stronghold for further expansion. The agrarian reforms were postponed and the feudal bondage with the antiquated taxation system was retained. The Balkan Peninsula, including Bosnia-Herzegovina, was of major economic and strategic significance for the Habsburg Monarchy as well as a contested sphere of interests of the Great Powers.

In January of 1879, the Provincial Government issued ordinance No.257 stipulating that all assemblies were prohibited unless the authorities have issued a special permit. A representative of the government attended such meetings and often furnished detailed reports duly dispatched to the authorities in Vienna. Political activities of any kind were strictly forbidden. Moreover, a number of various ordinances were posted establishing rules and regulations in regard to the civic and cultural life in the newly occupied provinces. Selected documents pertain to the issues of education as well as to the monitoring of cultural organizations such as reading halls, church- school communities, choral and musical groups, theatrical and musical performances.

The cultural activities of the population at large developed around reading rooms, and choral clubs attracting a sizeable membership. At first these societies were formed mainly on the basis of confessional affiliations but not exclusively. The authorities were well aware of the existing rapprochement between the Serbian and Croatian people, and feared most of all the possibility of the assimilation of the Muslims by the Serbs or Croats. Thus, the petitions for the foundation of reading rooms, singers group were studied with care by locale authorities and almost always forwarded to the higher authorities in Vienna for final approval.

The essay, "Thespian and Musical Life in Bosnia –Herzegovina," traced the steady efforts of native intellectuals and community leaders in organizing the popular reading halls, music societies, and first theatrical performances. Musical life most often developed around various choral societies, often enhancing special religious and secular festivities.

Some of the entreaties dealt with disputes over Austrian censorship of dailies and journals. The new administration paid great attention to controlling the public opinion keeping a watch over the reporting of current events. Any criticism of the *Landesregierung*—Provincial Government, and its policies were severely punished by imprisonment, and/or monetary fines. The harshness of the censorship policies testified to the vigilance of those in power to control the public opinion declining any possibility of a free discourse. The projected good offices of the Empire should not be tarnished in

front of the enlightened Europe: even a benevolent critique should be eradicated at any cost.

The intellectual subjugation of Bosnia-Herzegovina was perpetuated with the hiring of foreign bureaucrats, judges and legal clerks appointed to new administrative posts. Such policies were contested by the native intellectual elite demanding greater autonomy in cultural and educational affairs, as well as an increased participation in the economic and governing processes at large. The ensuing policies of the *Landesregierung* exacerbated the economic, ethnic and confessional divisiveness of the population. The subsequent chain of unrests, and in particular the uprising of 1882, testified to the discontent of the occupied population.

To this end, the juxtaposition of everyday public discourse, journalistic and literary renderings, ordinances, petitions, so called 'preventive censorship' of the press, as well as supplications, denials and appeals, provide a new point of view enhancing the understanding of the social and political circumstances in the occupied provinces.

Several essays examine the assessments of the Eastern Question by outstanding politicians, writers, and scholars aware of the delicate balance that was needed to maintain a peaceful coexistence within the provinces and with the neighboring states. Moreover, the Great Powers' imperial interest in the region became more apparent in view of gradual destabilization and possible demise of the Ottoman Empire, dubbed as the sick old man on the Bosphorus.

Benjamin von Kállay attained a deeper understanding of the Eastern Question, and the historical, political and demographic interdependence of Balkan nations, during his tenure as the Austro-Hungarian consul in Belgrade. Already as a student, Kállay entertained the idea of a Danubian Confederation of Balkan states based on democratic principles. Kállay's evaluation of the Eastern Question was considered in two essays titled, "Benjamin von Kállay's Reassessment of the Eastern Question: Concepts for a Solution" and, "Benjamin von Kállay's Role in Bosnia-Herzegovina 1882-1903."

Many renowned writers often discussed the difficult situation in Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Bulgaria during the uprising in 1875-1878 and the subsequent Russo-Turkish war. Most interesting was the debate between two outstanding men of letters, Lev Tolstoy and Fedor Dostoevsky that was examined in the essay "Tolstoy's and Dostoevsky's Responses to the Eastern Question 1875-1877: Images of the Self and Others."

Dostoevsky compared the comportment of Great Powers over the unresolved Eastern Question to the stalking of prey by a pack of hungry wolves. In his *Diary of a Writer*, Dostoevsky deplored the lack of ethical considerations by the Great Powers

when negotiating political, economic and territorial control in the Balkans in view of the pending demise of the Ottoman Empire. The solution of the Eastern Question seemed to be entwined with the precarious political and military equilibrium in Europe.

Tolstoy's understanding of the Eastern Question followed mainly the Russian state policy of *recueillement* since he understood well the need for the continuation of long overdue internal reforms. The official circles attempted to negotiate a peaceful solution to the Eastern Question and avoid military intervention in the Balkans. Alexander II aimed to preserve the Three Emperor's Alliance of Russia, Austria and Germany mainly to protect the established balance of Great Powers in Europe.

However, the response of the Russian intelligentsia as well as the Russian people at large influenced the reexamination of the official position. Since the efforts to induce the Porte to ameliorate the living conditions in Bosnia, Herzegovina and Bulgaria failed, Alexander II declared war on Turkey.

As Dostoevsky predicted, Tolstoy eventually revised his position and offered his support to the South Slavs. Both Tolstoy and his illustrious colloquist Dostoevsky believed that only Russia's benevolent intervention, devoid of self interest, would bring the true resolution of underlying old conflicts. Dostoevsky referred to Tolstoy as the "distinguished teacher," because he felt great writers should be the teachers of a nation. Dostoevsky himself understood the universality of the quest for freedom and human rights. Both writers evaluated the complexities of the historic, social, and political realities in the Balkans that remained invaluable even at the dawn of the new century.

The essays devoted to the ideological, literary, and fine- arts issues trace the cultural scene in Serbia during the twentieth century. A number of essays elucidated the active role that the writers and artists have played in the ideological and political debate in their country eschewing often enough the postulates of *L'art pour l'art* doctrine. The essay, "The Roles of Jovan Skerlić, Stevan Mokranjac and Paja Jovanović in Serbian Cultural History, 1900-1914," illustrated the contributions of these outstanding men as proponents of national entity and creators of ideological consciousness. Their artistic and ideological postulates corresponded to the expectation of the South Slav people, to their current cultural and political needs, as well as to the spirit of the time. This period of national struggle for unification was documented in a particular manner in many remarkable literary works, musical compositions, and pictorial creations.

The singular achievements by a group of young Serbian writers were explored in the essay titled "Poetics of Symbolism in Serbian Literature." The eloquence of the poems by Ilić, Dučić, Rakić and Petković was acknowledged early on and their poems gained wide acceptance by the readers and critics alike. The imaginative and expressive content of

their poems was equally matched by the stylistic virtuosity of their verses. These young writers were cognizant of the French Parnassian and symbolist writers who were held with great esteem by their contemporaries. Yet prior to the World War I there was a remarkable revival of patriotic poetry expressed in a novel mode. The unsettling events leading to the World War I did not completely quell the nascent literary activity. Even during the war years a number of journals were founded helping to sustain a considerable level of intellectual discourse as well as an exchange of pertinent daily communications.

The essay "Serbian Poetry and Pictorial Representation of the Holocaust" offers stark images of singular sufferings acquiring a universal and timeless connotation. The poetry of Desanka Maksimović commemorated the death of young pupils and their teachers in their school in Kragujavac. The poem titled "*Krvava bajka* (A Bloody Tale)" recounted this tragic event of retribution by the occupying forces.

The sculptures by Matija Vuković and Vida Jocić project haunted visions of despair and suffering commemorating nameless victims that have disappeared. The sculptures by Vida Jocić conjure emaciated human figures reduced to mere shadows, bereft of any individual features. The selected poems and art works offer a powerful reminder of the cruel reality of the Serbian Holocaust.

Following the end of World War II, the descent of the Iron Curtain marked the sphere of geopolitical interests and division of the population into two opposing halves. The ensuing precarious situation left an indelible mark upon the lives of many individuals caught in the whirlwind of confronting ideologies. The voices of women writers in Diaspora recorded the difficulties facing emigration and painful uprooting. The selected poems present a personal account of lives spent yearning for cohesion while trying to bridge the divided world embracing opposing political and social ideologies.

The writer Borislav Pekić depicted in the book *Godine koje su pojeli skakavci* (*The Years the Locusts Devoured*) his own recollections and that of his generation coming of age at the time of dictatorship of the Communist Party. With a group of high school friends, he frequented the clandestine Democratic Union, formed in 1947 by outstanding young men of his generation. The young members of the Union deplored the disregard of democratic traditions, introducing one party system, oppression and censorship of free speech. Pekić and his friends were eventually accused of treason, tried, and sentenced to prison. After his release, Pekić continued to speak and write about social injustice. He eventually attained an illustrious position in literary circles with the publication of his major novel *Zlatno runo* (*The Golden Fleece*). He sought to offer a reconstruction of the

history of humankind as encapsulated in Greek mythology. His narrative is also clearly entwined with the history of the Serbian people blurring mythical with historical references as if affirming that in essence the human condition is universal. Each generation is following in the footsteps of its predecessors trying but not always succeeding in setting a new and higher benchmark for their life's journey. In the end, solace lies in the acceptance of the continuation of life's journey in a quest for higher truth elucidated by the exceptional insights and personal life journey of Borislav Pekić, a writer of lasting and exceptional stature.

As an astute and concerned citizen, Pekić was among the many that joined the peaceful protest of the students from Belgrade University in 1991, and marched with them in the streets demanding needed political reforms.

The remarkable literary output of Milorad Pavić soon enough captured the imagination of his readers in his native country and abroad. Pavić's novel *Hazraski rečnik* (*The Dictionary of the Khazars*) has been translated into twenty four languages. The awareness of the past permeated the first collections of Pavić's poems published in 1967. This collection presented his tribute to the earlier *ars poetica* and the literary output of his predecessors. His subsequent novels paid homage to the repositories of human experiences, passions and aspirations, defining man and his universe. Thus, the novels and poetry of Milorad Pavić could be compared to a temporal palimpsest safeguarding historical, cultural and political testimonies of the past in counterpoint with present events. In order to fully comprehend Pavić's literary *oeuvre* one must reexamine the historic past. Pavić believed that this knowledge will also help to foretell future events as his novel *Poslednja ljubav u Carigradu* (*The Last Romance in Constantinople*) aspired to suggest. Thus, Pavić aimed most of all to demonstrate the open ended nature of his generous and delightful literary universe.

Pavić's singular vision of the Balkan history is entwined with the present time while transmitting a plurality of voices. The ongoing and unfinished dialogues of the protagonists are often a rejoinder bordering on someone else's thoughts pronounced before. This polyphonic discourse enables a more truthful understanding of the present. Such is his appreciation of the legacy of the ancient Byzantine commonwealth. Pavić considered himself to be the heir of this legacy embedded in the cultural consciousness of his own time.

The selected essays present a palimpsest of sorts aiming to elucidate the multifaceted responses to major historical events facing the ethnically diverse population of the Balkan Peninsula. The interdependence of historical, political and cultural issues underlies the relations between the Balkan States, Austria-Hungary, Ottoman Empire,

and Russia. The resulting historical and literary narratives testify to the unceasing endeavors of the populace to ensure a measure of cultural and political independence. Some documents offer unexpected insights into personal lives and tribulations that personified the voices of a legion searching for an elusive equality, respect, and human dignity.