


SERBIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS  
INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES

LIII



2022

# BALCANICA

*D. NIKOLIĆ, Three Votive Plaques from Upper Moesia • I. Komatina, A Hypothesis about the Origin of Závaš's Cross • J. HENDERSON & V. ŽIVKOVIĆ, Experiencing Disease and Medical Treatment in Renaissance Italy • F. GUIDA, The Second Eastern Crisis (1875–1878) • A. D'ALESSANDRI, The Opening of the Italian Legation in Belgrade in 1879 • J. I. TOMAŠEVIĆ, Movies about the First World War • M. RISTOVIĆ, The March on Rome and its Consequences • B. MILOSAVLJEVIĆ, Italy in the Writings of Slobodan Jovanović • J. RAFAILOVIĆ, Yugoslav-Italian Foreign Trade Relations 1919–1939 • M. T. MRAOVIĆ, Creation of an Alternate Reality • A. EREŠ, The Venice Biennale and Art in Belgrade in the 1950s • E. COSTANTINI, Relations between the PCI and the League of Communists from the Second Post-War Period to the Mid-1960 • M. DOGO, Belgrade 1969–1972 • B. ŽIVKOVIĆ, The Two Last Encounters between Broz and Berlinguer • P. DRAGIŠIĆ, The Yugoslav Perspective on Italian Eurocommunism in the Second Half of the 1970s* 

ANNUAL OF THE INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES

UDC 930.85(4-12)

BELGRADE 2022

ISSN 0350-7653  
eISSN 2406-0801

SLOBODAN VUKOVIĆ, *KORENI VELIKOG RATA I NACIZMA*,  
SREMSKI KARLOVCI-NOVI SAD: IZDAVAČKA KNJIŽARNICA ZORANA STOJANOVIĆA, 2022.

Reviewed by Bogdan Živković\*

The centenary of the First World War was a rather important event in Serbia. The anniversary did not only attract the attention of the nation's historians. Particularly due to the popularity of Christopher Clark's (in) famous *The Sleepwalkers*, the causes of the war also became a burning topic in public debates. Hence, in Serbia, the years 2014–2018 were marked by a reaffirmation of the anti-revisionist discourse on the triggers and causes that led to the outbreak of the war. While the works of Fritz Fischer were quoted as the principal counterargument to Clark's viewpoints, the interest in WWI also revived the Serbian historiographical contribution to the topic of the causes of the global conflict. Many were reminded of the works by authors like Andrej Mitrović, and the Institute for Balkan Studies published an English translation of Vladimir Ćorović's seminal book on this topic – *The Relations between Serbia and Austria-Hungary in the 20th Century*.

In 2022, the Serbian anti-revisionist school of thought became richer with the latest publication of sociologist Slobodan Vuković. Vuković's study deals with the root causes of German expansionism in WWI and the genocidal policies during the era of Nazism, viewing the two as inextricable parts of the same historical process. What makes this book particularly interesting and relevant in the Serbian context is its methodological approach. Namely, as the author is a sociologist, this book was written as historical sociology. It is a methodological approach that was lacking in Serbia, as the leading authors on the topic were historians, who mostly used the classic methodology of diplomatic history. In contrast to them, Vuković approaches the issue of German

responsibility for the war by highlighting various social phenomena. The author writes about class, intellectuals, universities, civil society, racism, anti-Semitism, colonialism. Among various phenomena addressed, Vuković highlights two – the tradition of Prussian militarism and the rise of social Darwinism in Germany. In his opinion, these two ideas were embedded into the fabric of German nationalism, the pillars of the national unification, and ultimately led the German national ideology towards expansionism and genocide. And according to Vuković, the German intelligentsia was the crucial actor in articulating and disseminating such ideas.

The author analysed the topic by using an extensive list of publications. In fact, the most impressive feature of this study is its bibliography. At the end of the book, Vuković lists the monographs and articles he used on more than 50 pages. But the sheer quantity of its references is not the only quality of this scholarly endeavour. More importantly, the author used the most relevant works in English and German a far more modest group of seminal works in French and Serbian. Thus, the book gives not only the author's viewpoints, which are clearly expressed, but also an overview of the most relevant international scholarly works on this topic and the author's analyses of them.

To highlight the continuities that go beyond 1914, Vuković dedicates the first chapter of the book to the Herero and

---

\* bogdan.zivkovic@bi.sanu.ac.rs  
Institute for Balkan Studies SASA, Belgrade,  
Serbia

Nama genocide perpetrated by the German colonial forces in Southwest Africa. This case study serves as an example of the German Empire's early genocidal policies, but Vuković also uses it to describe the racist views of the German elites which fuelled and legitimized the genocidal intents. Particular attention is dedicated to the activities of social Darwinist scholars, who legitimized the ideas of extermination of the *Other* and created a "genocidal mentality".

The second chapter of the book returns to 19th-century Germany, describing the expansionist ideas present in the time of the German national unification. In the term *Mitteleuropa*, seemingly modest in its ambitions, Vuković sees the enormous territorial appetites of the elites even in the initial era of German expansionism. The third and fourth chapters describe how, with the growth of the German state, those expansionist ideas gained more ground and became dominant. Besides highlighting the *Lebensraum* concept, in these two chapters, Vuković also emphasises racism as the main ideological fuel of the expansionist worldview in Germany.

The fifth chapter has a more specific focus than the others, as it narrates the history of anti-Semitism in Germany. The author strives to prove two points: firstly, that the genocidal anti-Semitic ideology of Nazism was not an exception in German history, but a reflection of lasting national traditions. Secondly, Vuković argues that anti-Semitism became an integral part of the German national idea, serving as the negation of the imagined essential values of the German identity. In Vuković's view, the anti-Semitism of Martin Luther was the initial point of that process, which gained momentum in the 1870s and eventually shaped Hitler's policies, ending with the Holocaust.

Chapters six, seven and eight focus on the years prior to and shortly after 1914. In these chapters, the author tries to demonstrate how and why Germany initiated the war and to what extent the national elites

participated in that process. The eighth chapter discusses German expansionism towards South-eastern Europe. Finally, the last chapter deals with revisionist views in German and international historiography. From a strong antirevisionist position, the author thoroughly and critically analyses the works of scholars who sought to minimize German culpability for WWI and/or de-contextualise Nazism as an isolated episode in German history.

Vuković's book is a valuable addition to the vast body of Serbian anti-revisionist historiography which focuses on German imperialism in the twentieth century. It is important primarily as a methodological innovation. The impressive bibliography the author used for writing this book provides an opportunity for Serbian scholars to get acquainted with the most relevant publications on this topic. But, more broadly speaking, this study demonstrates, once more, that the issue of responsibility for the global conflicts in the twentieth century remains an important topic in Serbia. Noteworthy publications, like this one, continue to be published and illuminate this topic from various viewpoints.

ISSN 0350-7653



9 770350 765003 >