

UDC 930.85(4-12)

ISSN 0350-7653

SERBIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS  
INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES

# BALCANICA

## XLIII

ANNUAL OF THE INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES

Editor

DUŠAN T. BATAKOVIĆ

Editorial Board

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

BELGRADE  
2012



tions between the monastery and local authorities and payment of taxes due to the state. The monastery's rights over its estates and sources of income were often disputed by neighbours or local notables, and with a help of many documents one can reconstruct how such problems were handled and resolved. Also, the Ottoman documents can provide some information about the relationship between the monks and religious authorities, notably the Patriarchate in Constantinople.

The archival material from a monastery situated on an island is, of course, of great interest to researchers concerned with any topic relating to the sea. Patmos was involved in the Aegean trade network, but its trade connections were not limited to the nearby regions, but encompassed the whole of the Mediterranean. Apart from trade, the documents also provide information about agriculture and animal husbandry on the Aegean islands. The sea can bring as many problems as benefits to insular communities. The Patmiots expe-

rienced many problems caused by piracy, and several documents testify to the aid they extended to the victims of pirate attacks.

The *Catalogue of the Ottoman documents in the Archive of the Monastery of Saint John on Patmos* can be highly useful to all researchers interested in the history of the Orthodox monasteries in the Ottoman Empire. The documents provide information about the functioning of the monastery as an institution, about its economic activities and its relationship with Ottoman central and local authorities. Moreover, given the distinctive role that the monastery of Saint John played in the society of the island, its archive is also a source of valuable information about the life of all inhabitants of the island. Taken as a whole, these documents can give us a picture of the life on an Aegean island under Ottoman rule, which could never be completely isolated from events taking place elsewhere across the vast empire.

JOVAN DJ. AVAKUMOVIĆ, *MEMOARI* [MEMOIRS], ED. SLOBODAN TURLAKOV.  
SREMSKI KARLOVCI – NOVI SAD: IZDAVAČKA KNJIŽARNICA ZORANA STOJANOVIĆA,  
2008, pp 686.

*Reviewed by Aleksandra Kolaković\**

Jovan Avakumović (1841–1928), Serbian jurist, politician, and member of Royal Serbian Academy, was one of the figures who marked the political and social scene in Serbia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. A descendant of the merchant Babadudić family, he graduated in law from the Great School (*Velika škola*) in Belgrade and then continued his law studies in Germany, France and Switzerland. Avakumović began his career as first secretary of the Court of Cassation (1871), and held the office of mayor of Belgrade (1875), chief of the Police Department of the Ministry

of Interior (1875–1880) and judge of the Court of Cassation (1881–1887).

As a member of the Liberal Party, Avakumović served twice as Minister of Justice, in the cabinet of Jovan Ristić (1881) and the coalition cabinet of Liberals and Radicals (1887). He was Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1892 until the King Alexander Obrenović's coup d'état of 1893, which was the reason why the Radicals demanded that Avakumović and some other

---

\* Institute for Balkan Studies, Belgrade

members of the Liberal government be tried. After the assassination of King Alexander and Queen Draga Obrenović (29 May 1903), Avakumović again became the Prime Minister of Serbia. During his premiership, Peter I Karadjordjević accessed the throne as King of Serbia and the Constitution of 1888 was reinstated.

During the First World War, Avakumović was captured and sent to the internment camp in Cegled (Hungary), and thence at Hietzing (Austria). After the war, he withdrew from politics and started a law practice. Avakumović wrote a number of books on legal issues including: *Teorija kaznenog prava* (1887–1891) [The Theory of Criminal Law 1887–1891], *Nužna odbrana* [Self-Defence], *Važnost krivičnog zakona* [The Importance of Criminal Law], *Francuska i Engleska porota* [French and English Juries] etc.

The memoirs of Jovan Avakumović cover nearly sixty years of political and social life in Serbia, encompassing the reign of three Obrenović rulers: Michael/Mihailo (1860–1868), Milan (1872–1889) and Alexander (1893–1903), and one Karadjordjević: Peter I (1903–1918), as well as the period of the First World War. It is divided chronologically into six thematically structured chapters.

The first chapter describes the period from 1840 to 1869. Having reminisced about his childhood and family background, Avakumović moves on to his education at Heidelberg, Berlin, Zurich and Paris (1862–1868) and the friendships he struck up during those years. Most of the chapter is devoted to the assassination of Prince Michael Obrenović (1868) and the trial of the assassins, in which he took part as assistant of one of the investigators. Following his appointment as secretary of the Ministry of Interior in 1868, he became a close friend of Radivoje Milojković, Minister of Interior and Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs. He also enjoyed the trust of the three-men Re-

gency (Milivoje Blaznavac, Jovan Ristić and Jovan Gavrilović) ruling on behalf of Prince Milan Obrenović, as evidenced by a wealth of information about them, their mutual relations and the events they participated in. The second chapter covers the course of his career and political life in Serbia between 1869 and 1883, including the adoption of the Constitution (1869), the Serbian-Ottoman wars (1876–78), the Congress of Berlin (1878), the so-called Timok Rebellion (1883). Along with his recollections of the Congress of Berlin written immediately after the event, Avakumović added a text about the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1908), which he obviously wrote much later. This confirms what Avakumović himself stressed: some parts of his memoirs were notes produced at the time of the events in question, whereas others underwent some modifications and took their final shape later.

Party struggles, the reign of King Milan Obrenović and his conflict with the Radicals, the divorce of King Milan and Queen Natalie, the adoption of a new Constitution (1888) are described in the third chapter of the memoirs. When Jovan Ristić, leader of the Liberals, served as Regent (1889–92) for the young King Alexander Obrenović, Avakumović's influence in the Liberal Party grew, which was reflected in its organization and activities. Apart from his own party, Avakumović pays special attention to the activity of the Radical Party and its relations with two Obrenović sovereigns, Milan and his son Alexander, between 1883 and 1893. Not surprisingly, he dwells on the programme, composition and activities of his own government, with special reference to the coup d'état mounted by King Alexander Obrenović (1893) which led to the fall of his cabinet. In this part of his memoirs, Avakumović gives valuable testimonies about his dealings with foreign diplomats in Serbia.

The fourth chapter covers the period from 1894 to 1902. It opens with the description of the proceedings brought against him and his ministers on charges of violation of the Constitution during the parliamentary elections in 1893. Avakumović also records his view of King Alexander's abolition of the Constitution (1894) and reinstatement of the conservative Constitution of 1869. The premiership of Vladan Djordjević and the situation in the Liberal Party, particularly after the death of Jovan Ristić (1899), are described in detail. The failed assassination attempt on ex-King Milan in 1899, which took place on St. John the Baptist's Day (*Ivanjdanski atentat*), the reign of Alexander Obrenović and his marriage to Draga Mašin, the April Constitution (1901) are also touched upon in the fourth chapter of the memoirs.

The fifth chapter reviews the last year of the life and reign of King Alexander (1902) and the distinctive decade that preceded the Balkan Wars (1912–13). After an account of his meetings with King Alexander and Dimitrije Cincar Marković and the assassination of King Alexander and Queen Draga (the May Coup), Avakumović explains his activities during the reign of Peter Karadjordjević. As Prime Minister of Serbia, later an MP, Avakumović had a number of opportunities to meet and exchange views with King Peter I. These conversations, Avakumović's suggestions concerning the education of the King's sons, and his notes on Crown Prince Djordje's relinquishment of the throne in favour of his younger brother, Prince Alexander, make an ample contribution to the history of the Karadjordjević dynasty. On the other hand, Avakumović briefly sketches the turbulent events surrounding the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Balkan Wars.

The sixth chapter focuses on the Great War (1914–1918). On the day of the as-

sassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, Avakumović was on his way to Vienna with his family, and thus witnessed firsthand the atmosphere that the Archduke's death caused in Austria-Hungary. He then gives a detailed account of his return to Serbia and Austria's attack on Belgrade. Avakumović's description of the refugees flooding into central Serbia and the conditions of daily life in the towns of Niš, Čačak, Kraljevo and Vrnjačka Banja, provides a vivid glimpse into what the war operations of 1914–15 brought to Serbia. Finally, Avakumović recalls the Austro-Hungarian occupation, his own arrest and internment in Hungary and Austria, and the end of the war.

Due to the abundance of information and Avakumović's prominent role in Serbia's politics, his memoirs are an important source for the history of Serbia. The most valuable sections of the memoirs are certainly those in which he discusses his own participation in government and the political activities of his Liberal Party. Much is said about the Obrenović and Karadjordjević dynasties, and many political figures in Serbia before the First World War. The author's interesting account of his studies at prominent foreign universities, his travels and contacts with foreign diplomats and journalists, and the description of his internment expand the usual range of topics for which memoirs can be an important source. Avakumović's profession seems to have influenced his clear and precise train of thought and his tendency to provide additional explanations. The memoirs of such a prominent political and legal figure as Jovan Avakumović undoubtedly are a treasure trove for historians and all lovers of history.