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IN MEMORIAM

RADOVAN SAMARDŽIĆ (1922-1994)

I

Radovan Samardžić, beyond any doubt, was one of the greatest Serbian historians of the 20th century if judged by the scope and significance of his prominent work. His wide scholarly interests ranged from political history of the Ottoman era (16th-17th c.), history of culture and sciences in the period of Enlightenment and restoration of national states (18th-20th c.), to the currents of thought throughout modern and contemporary ages. Radovan Samardžić was born in Sarajevo 1922, graduated history from Belgrade University, Faculty of Philosophy in 1949, received his PhD with professor Jorjo Tadić in 1956. He specialized with Fernand Braudel in his Paris seminar (1957-58), and at the Institute for European History in Mainz (1967-68). He was professor of history at Belgrade University, Faculty of Philosophy (until 1990), Head of the History Department, editor-in-chief of the "Jugoslovenski istorijski časopis" (1974-81), member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, and Secretary to its Department of Historical Sciences (1985-89), as well as Director of the Institute for Balkan Studies (1978-88). He was the President of the Editorial Board preparing the most ambitious project of Serbian historiography - *Istorija srpskog naroda* (History of the Serbs, 1981-1992, in ten vols.), editor of the third volume and co-author of the III, IV and VI volumes.

Radovan Samardžić's major work is his trilogy : *Mehmed Sokolović* (Belgrade, 1971) with its four Serbian editions, and translations to Polish (Lodz, 1982) and French (Lausanne, 1994): *Sulejman i Rokselana* (Belgrade, 1976; 2nd ed. 1987); and posthumously published *Osman* (Belgrade, 1995). By the subject and content, the trilogy is akin to the monograph *Veliki vek Dubrovnika* (The Great Age of Dubrovnik, Belgrade, 1962; 2nd ed. 1983), devoted to the 17th-century Dubrovnik. While carrying out his research for

this book, Radovan Samardžić gathered and published a comprehensive collection of archival material *Borba Dubrovnika za opstanak posle velikog zemljotresa 1667* (Dubrovnik's Struggle for Survival after the 1667 Great Earthquake, Belgrade, 1960), whereas it was in Paris that he gathered poorly known testimonies of French travelers in the central Balkans, which he translated and published under the title *Beograd i Srbija u spisima francuskih savremenika XVI-XVII veka* (Belgrade and Serbia in the Records of French Contemporaries in the 16th-17th Centuries, Belgrade, 1961, bilingual Serbo-French edition). His historical essays, intended to be the part of a thematic whole, were published in books: *Usmena narodna hronika* (Oral Popular Chronicle, Novi Sad, 1978), devoted to the relations between the epic and historical in folk poetry; *Ideje za srpsku istoriju* (Ideas for Serbian History, Belgrade, 1989), containing his essays on the cornerstones of Serbian history; and *Kosovsko opredeljenje* (The Meaning of Kossovo, Belgrade, 1990), analyzing the relationship of the historical and legendary in "the Serbian testamentary thought". The three books of historical essays, written with a pronounced philosophical note, contain the sum of Samardžić's views of history. His essays on the history of historiography were published in four volumes of *Pisci srpske istorije* (Writers of Serbian History, 1976-1995). Book of his interviews *Na rubu istorije* (On the Edge of History, Belgrade, 1994) was published posthumously. Radovan Samardžić's books and articles, most of them of synthetic nature, were published in various scholarly publications and collections of works in France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Greece and the U.S.A. It was under his editorship that the book *Kosovo i Metohija u srpskoj istoriji* (Kossovo and Metohija in Serbian History, Belgrade, 1989; French and German translations - Lausanne, 1990) was done as a complete survey of the history of the region, as well as the historical chapters of *Zadužbine Kosova* (The Kossovo Endowments, Belgrade-Prizren, 1987), with new documents covering the period from the 16th to 20th centuries. He also acted as the editor of various collections of works submitted at numerous symposia organized by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the Institute for Balkan Studies.

II

Firmly relying upon rich legacy of Serbian historiography, Radovan Samardžić considered the history of Serbs as a problem which could not be understood without its Balkan dimension and, furthermore, out of its broader European perspective. His major works, dedicated to the first centuries of the Ottoman rule (the above-mentioned trilogy), are thus clearly marked by an endeavour to view the Balkan mosaics of nations, religions and traditions as a dynamic entity dependent upon complex interaction of local conditions, Ottoman framework and European processes. Biographical method was, therefore, used only as a convenient means to refract, as if in a focus, a broadly taken picture of the entire Balkan area through lives and destinies of prominent figures of the epoch.

Radovan Samardžić never reduced the results of his research to an exact communication of mere facts, but transcended them by an elevated understanding that was designated by the critics, *apropos* of *Mehmed Sokolović*, as a "scholarly synthesis in a higher intellectual projection". The experience of French school of structures of the Mediterranean world and the German tradition of "living through" past realities were merged into Samardžić's method producing new quality. F. Braudel's and W. Dilthey's postulates were taken only as starting points in his research. Comparing Turkish, Venetian and Dubrovnik materials to the tradition preserved in hagiographic writings, creations of Dubrovnik poets and epic folk tradition, Samardžić deduced an authentic reconstruction of Balkan history of the 16th and early 17th centuries. From these investigations, enriched with comparative study of European processes, his well-known theory was derived of "the sorrowful 16th-century man" and "disunion of civilizations" - as the phenomena resulting from the break with the Middle Ages and the ingress into the Modern Age. It was with particular affinity that he wrote about the Levantine world and its religious syncretism, recognizing the forms common to various Balkan nations.

Studying history of the Dubrovnik Republic with special passion and steadiness, he showed in his *Veliki vek Dubrovnika* to which extent the links of this small Slavic enclave with its broader hinterland had determined its cultural horizons and shaped its literary interests, even in the 17th century, the age of its full prosperity. Material from rich series of the Dubrovnik Archives served as a basis for comparative verification of the tradition fixed in "oral folk chronicles". National history inscribed in epic poems, especially in those about national leaders and haiduks that had revolted against the Turks, appeared thus, with all poetic ornamentation being removed, as an important, often relevant historical source. On the other hand, as Samardžić used to emphasize, the epic tradition had gradually become substance of a unique "epic vertical" which, impressed into collective consciousness of the people during the Ottoman rule, was to be one of major foundations of the 19th-century national revival.

The study of cultural heritage and epic tradition in particular incited his special affinity for the research, analysis and critical redaction of the works of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić. His attention was focused on the epic poems Vuk had collected, calendars he had edited and historical writings he had left behind (*Istorijski spisi I-II*, Belgrade, 1969; *Danica za 1826, 1827, 1829, 1834*, Belgrade, 1969; *Treća knjiga srpskih narodnih pjesama*, Belgrade, 1988).

Besides reconstruction of certain epochs and conspicuous processes marking them, Samardžić's line of work was also directed to systematic research of historiographical heritage (*Pisci srpske istorije I-IV*): his intention was not only to evaluate the writers of history, from Jovan Rajić, Vuk Karadžić, Stojan Novaković and Jovan Ristić to Vladimir Ćorović, Slobodan Jovanović and Jorjo Tadić, by their contributions to greater knowledge of the

past, but also to situate these contributions in reference to a broader frame of cultural history and the currents of thought that were marking their epoch.

He attached special importance to republishing and critical edition of *Sabrana dela Slobodana Jovanovića* (Collection of Works of Slobodan Jovanović, in 12 vols., Belgrade, 1991), considering him to be one of the greatest Serbian historians and jurists, brilliant stylist whose texts on the 19th-century Serbia, along with his treatises on law, were proscribed by the Communist authorities for half a century due to Jovanović's participation in Royal government in London during World War Two. As one of editors of his works, Samardžić wrote the most complete essay so far dealing not only with Jovanović's method, but also with his literary proceeding which made way for the so-called Belgrade style in literature. By the end of January 1994, a few days before his death, Radovan Samardžić was granted the "Slobodan Jovanović Award" for his authorship and editorship in the third volume of *Istorija srpskog naroda*.

III

Radovan Samardžić was not only the great historian whose Renaissance-like knowledge, as transposed into his books, has captivated both common readers and his colleagues, not only a favourite professor emphasizing in his lectures the European dimension of Serbian and Balkan history, he was also an unrivaled charmer and eloquent orator, reliable support for his associates and students, both in everyday life and in their professional quandaries - choice of topics and research priorities. He was an apt initiator of major projects, particularly interested in establishing close cooperation between Belgrade and Balkan and European historiographies. Strengthening already numerous contacts of the Institute for Balkan Studies with scientific centers in Southeast Europe (notably Greece), Samardžić insisted upon systematic study of Balkan themes in great European centers, from Italy and France to Austria, Germany and the U.S.A. Special agreements were made with the CNRS, Paris, and The University of Santa Barbara, California, aimed at the study of major projects. Two important scientific symposia and two collections of works came as results of that cooperation : the Balkan urban culture was investigated in concert with the CNRS, and the history of Balkan migrations with the UCLA. While the implementation of many agreements on bilateral cooperation was still waiting for more favourable conditions, Samardžić initiated by the end of his life an attempt at comprehensive insight into historical and cultural contribution the Serbs have made to European civilization, a project whose results were recently published in English and Serbian under the title *Serbs in European Civilization*.

With the departure of Radovan Samardžić, the Serbian and Yugoslav, Balkan and European science is left without an outstanding personality whose opus, we are certain, will carry growing weight with time.

Dušan T. Bataković