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THE RISE AND FALL VOJVODINIAN LIBERALS

Abstract: The political rise and fall of Vojvodinian Liberals, led by Mirko Čanadanović, is one of the topics from our recent history that has so far not been historiographically treated in the way it deserves, as opposed to publicist material and memoirs in which the events from the early 1970's in Vojvodina received considerable attention. This paper is an attempt to make a sketch for the portrait of a young and promising political team, whose development was suddenly interrupted by the authoritarian intervention of Josip Broz Tito to the joy and satisfaction of certain Belgrade and Novi Sad political circles. The paper was written on the basis of the previously unreleased original material from the Archive of Vojvodina (fund of the Provincial Committee), numerous published and autobiographical sources, the periodicals published at the time and a small quantity of historiographical literature.

Keywords: Vojvodina, Yugoslavia, liberals, Serbia, politics.

Unlike the Novi Sad political team which in the early 1970's was characterized as "liberal", the actions of their peers from Belgrade has been evaluated by our historiography.¹ The academician Ljubodrag Dimić claims that the reasons for the fall of Serbian liberals lie in the differences of "a conceptual nature which could not be overcome".² His predecessor and mentor Branko Petranović appreciated the fact that the goals of liberal "opposition" were "anti-selfadministrative".³ The Croatian historian Dušan Bilandžić also believed that after the collapse of the Croatian Spring the "major center of resistance remained in Serbia, in Belgrade".⁴ Regarding the case of Vojvodinian liberals these three most prominent historians of the Yugoslav state did not express any specific opinions.

The political rise of Vojvodinian liberals happened almost simultaneously with the rise of Belgrade liberals in April 1967, when, instead Đurica Jojkić who was ill, Mirko Tepavac

¹ The last in a group of research studies dealing with the Serbian liberalism from 1968 until 1972 is a doctoral thesis of Milivoj Bešlin, defended at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad in 2015.

² Dimić 2001: 433.

³ Petranović 1978: 582.

⁴ Bilandžić 1979: 432.

became president and Mirko Čanadanović secretary of the Provincial Committee (PC) of the League of Communists of Vojvodina (LCV). This choice did not suit Stevan Doronjski, whose political influence, after many years of stagnation, was again on the rise. His favorites for the positions of the President and the Secretary of the Vojvodinian party organizations were Radovan Vlajković and Đorđe Radosavljević Grne.⁵ The animosity which then occurred between Tepavac and Doronjski would lead to new conflicts within the traditionally divided Vojvodinian PC, which would become an open matter in December 1968 at the 14th electoral conference of the LC of Vojvodina.

The 14th conference was held one month after the Sixth Congress of the League of Communists of Serbia (LCS), when Marko Nikezić was elected President and Latinka Perović was elected Secretary of the Central Committee. The new party leadership of Serbia, all educated and young people, were close to their Vojvodinian peers regarding many ideological issues so cordial relations were instantly established between them. Encouraged by the background that they had had in Belgrade, Vojvodinian liberals tried and failed to bring about a change of generations at the 14th conference and at the same time “cleanse” the PC of their opponents. Because of the eliminations in the process of nomination as well as during the election of the new structure of the PC, among the 35 members of this body there were not Radovan Vlajković, Dušan Popović, Boško Krunic, Đorđe Stojić and other followers of Stevan Doronjski. Defeated in mid January 1969, they expressed their resentment because of the defeat in the elections, for which they blamed the electoral system, agitation, and frame-ups etc.

Ambitious and confident, Tepavac and Čanadanović’s radical rejuvenation of the PC turned against them numerous influential fighters of the War of National Liberation and, what was equally dangerous for their careers, they managed to unite the fierce enemies from fractional conflicts of the 1960’s, Stevan Doronjski and Jovan Veselinov, who opposed the personnel changes in Vojvodina at the January meeting, just like Marko Peričin Kamenjar. That the conflict between “liberals” and “conservatives” was not exclusively a conflict between the younger and the older generations, but had a more profound political background is indicated in the fact that in Vojvodina a group of people was politically rehabilitated and reactivated. These same people were accused of being “Great Serbs” in the previous years: Đorđe Nikšić, Petar Relić, Jovan Dačić, Aleksandar Vasić, Svetozar Kostić, Miloslav Gonja.⁶

The reappointment of Ilija Rajačić and Stipan Marušić as Presidents of the Vojvodina Assembly and the Executive Council of Vojvodina respectively, as well as of the personnel in the federal and republic authorities in early 1969, only fortified the position of Liberals in Vojvodina.⁷ However, Stevan Doronjski kept the position of the member of the Presidency of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY),⁸ from which he would

⁵ Čanadanović 2012: 130.

⁶ Čanadanović 2012: 62.

⁷ What is interesting is the attitude of the Provincial Coordinating Board, which was supported by the PC, that the “selection of people from the Province should not be done in the Province, but according to whoever gets the support of the whole Republic”. AV, fund 334, Minutes of the meeting of the Secretariat of the PC, 13 January 1969.

⁸ In his diary Stevan Doronjski wrote that Mirko Tepavac unsuccessfully agitated against his election. After:

coordinate the activities of his supporters in Vojvodina. These activities were directed against the PC, chaired by Mirko Čanadanović (who was replaced as secretary by Miloš Radojčin) and where Mirko Tepavac took over the duty of the chief of diplomacy in March. In the next three years, the young Vojvodinian leadership more actively raised the issues of economic backwardness of the Province and reached a consensus with the national party leadership about the changes in the constitutional status of Vojvodina.⁹

But similar to the rise of Vojvodinian Liberals, their decline was also conditioned by the destiny of their Belgrade peers. In July 1972 Dragoslav Marković and Petar Stambolić began a campaign aimed at overthrowing the leadership of the LCS, accusing them of insufficiently respecting Tito, avoiding a conflict with the opposition at the university, neglecting the personnel from the Yugoslav People's Army, insufficiently ignoring the anti-Communist movements in the sphere of culture etc. The fraction that had its stronghold in the Presidency of the Assembly of Serbia and in the Alliance of Fighters was supported by the Vojvodinian personnel, who were an opposition of the leaders of the PC.¹⁰ On the other hand, Vojvodinian Liberals gave open support to the leadership of the republic party organizations, suggesting it to cut all activities of the opposition by calling the meeting of the Central Committee of the LCS. This did not happen and so Tito's intervention followed.

At a meeting of the political work group of Vojvodina in early October 1972, on the occasion of the forthcoming meeting of the Serbian leadership with Tito, the content of the conversation transcripts of the highest national leaders was analyzed, without the representatives of the provinces present. In connection with the big differences that were evident from the transcripts, Pal Šoti expressed his belief that the bearers of "the ideas on a new course, that they are the bearers of politics of the good old days so to say, which I remember very well, and among other things let's say that those times were manifested in the fact that the representatives of the elected organs of this Province went to the ministry to discuss how the budget will be used to buy metals, ink, paper, etc. and only when we received a confirmation, then we could freely use these funds". He reminded the people present that, with the arrival of the current leadership of the Central Committee of the LCS, "significant, actually, not significant, but massive changes" were made in relation to the socio-political role of "our province that earlier we were not even allowed to call autonomous, and I think that the fighters against these legal and regularly elected and normally functioning positive forces, these fighters aspire towards the old way of leadership and old relationships".

Ilija Rajačić also noted that some people in Belgrade received the past constitutional changes in Belgrade "under discipline and some apparently even today could not and did

Končar, Boarov 2011:506-507.

⁹ According to the assessment of Milivoj Bešlin, liberal leadership of the LCS abandoned the "all-Serbian" political concept, i.e. the idea that the common state was more necessary for Serbia than for others, and thus gave up the role of the "guardian of Yugoslavia" focusing more on the economic development of their own republic. Such a political orientation of Marko Nikezić and Latinka Perović was tightly connected with the changes in the constitutional concept of the Yugoslav federalism at the end of the 1960's and the beginning of the 1970's. Bešlin 2013: 56.

¹⁰ In that context Mirko Čanadanović mentions Đorđe Stojšić, Boško Krunic and Jovan Dejanović, functionaries of the republic Assembly. Čanadanović 2012: 88.

not accept that because their concepts and political frameworks were somewhat different”. Geza Tikvicki also confirmed that “since the war until now” no “leadership” of the republic party organization showed such an understanding of Vojvodina as much as the current one and that the degree of autonomous rights was realized by the constitutional amendments. The most deserving are the leaders of the Central Committee of the LCS, which “us Vojvodinians must not lose sight of even for a moment”. Elaborating Šoti’s memories from the early 1960’s, he himself testified that “even this room is a kind of historical stage where not so long ago the whip of statism, centralism, conservatism and Great Serbian hegemony lashed out on the very eve of their departure from the historical stage of our development and the collapse of the politics of Ranković and not only him, at the stage of a stronger penetration of the new democratic self-governing conceptions of the organization of our socialist community – Yugoslavia. It’s not bad to be a bit reminded in these talks of those historical events, because it is not bad to learn from history”.

Miladin Gvozdenov presented his theory that, after it was “effectively suppressed at the level of the Federation,” the Great Serbian nationalism would “by the law of development go back for some prey, for a victim in its own home regardless of who is its bearer. I believe that it is about such pressure and tendencies”. Mihajlo Šefer noted that before the current leadership of the Central Committee of the LCS came to power in Vojvodina, there was “a distinct antagonism towards Serbia.” Franja Nađ confirmed the familiarity with the republic party leadership with the belief that by defending or attacking the policy of the Central Committee of the LCS, “we, as the Province or the PC or the members of the Party in the Province, defend ourselves”. The other participants in the discussion spoke in the same tone: Miloš Nikolčin, Jovan Vulić, Olga Vitorović. The voice of Ida Sabo remained alone while she reprimanded most of the panelists for overemphasizing the role of the Central Committee of the LCS for the improved position of the autonomy: “I think that there are different conditions in the whole country, a different development, different relationships, the decentralization of the Federation itself had to lead to this.”

Finally the Secretary and President of the PC of the League of Communists of Vojvodina (LCV) presented their thoughts. Reminding of the differences manifested before and during the Third Conference of LCS, Miloš Radojčin expressed doubt that “a number of these forces, groups or individuals, precisely because of this Third Conference of the LCS, lost their temper and started to be nervous, fell into hysterics and I am very close to claiming that it was one of the key reason that now, when we need to realize the second phase of constitutional changes in this self-management course, that right now they are seeking either reasons or differences, more or less hazy or clear, so we can finally return to another course”. In line with the predominant tone of discussion, which ran in the direction of linking the attack on the leadership of the LCS with undermining of autonomy, Mirko Čanadanović accused “certain people from the Constitutional Commission of the Republic of Serbia” of pleading for a “degradation of the basic document of the SAP of Vojvodina” – specifically mentioning the name of Dragoslav Marković.¹¹

A few days later, at a meeting with Tito, Mirko Čanadanović reiterated that there were

¹¹ AV, fund 334, Minutes from the closed meeting of the political work group of Vojvodina of 6 October 1972.

“today, today in the literal sense of the word, people who still fundamentally challenge the position of autonomy” against the dominant party line in the republic League of Communists, which in this respect was “for the first time so clear, ever since you laid it out in such a clear way in your response during the war to the leadership of the Party of Vojvodina, when you said that Vojvodina would get the status in accordance with the socialist, federative system of our country and the Vojvodinian people’s will”. Tito was told about the harmonious, almost idyllic relations between the republic and provincial leadership by other present Vojvodinians: Mačas Kelemen, Mihalj Šefer, Ilija Rajačić. Again, the only one opposing was Ida Sabo, who blamed the Central Committee of the LCS that, after the initial good results, it entered into “some compromises with certain forces which very loudly opposed the changes of the constitutional amendments, against the independence of the province, and were even brought to more responsible functions than they had previously had...”

During the Third Conference of the LCS Miloš Radojčin presented to Tito the difficulties with which the representatives of the provinces and proponents of the constitutional amendments faced on that occasion. Not dwelling on allusions, Pal Šoti directly called out Dragoslav Marković, Petar Stambolić and Dušan Petrović and said that they were not the bearers of the concept of a strong Serbia with strong autonomous provinces, but of deprived autonomy “without, first of all, any material independence”. He mentioned the activity of the said “comrades” in the period of “guided economy”, when assets were only “dislocated” from Vojvodina and when nothing was invested. To his defense, Dragoslav Marković admitted that as president of the republic Constitutional Commission he “at first did not have a clear position either concerning the province or the federation or even other issues. I’ve invested an effort, a constructive effort to adopt, to accept that, I accepted, I consistently fight, I was at a very prominent position even when I was not the President of the Assembly. Since 1967 I have been the President of the Constitutional Commission, I probably had more chances to make mistakes than others, and I’ve probably been in a situation, by the very fact that I made mistakes, to give a greater contribution to solving these mistakes than others. Neither of these has been my flaw or any other special virtue, but a confluence of certain circumstances that I have been doing this job”.¹²

However, the support of Vojvodinians did not save Belgrade liberals. On the contrary, upon learning that the change of the leadership of the LCS was imminent, Dušan Popović, as a leading opponent of Vojvodinian liberals, launched a campaign against them.¹³ On 22 October at the extended meeting of the Novi Sad Municipal Committee, which was his mainstay, Popović criticized the “negative phenomena” in the Vojvodinian and Serbian League of Communists. He asked that the members of the PC take a self-critical stance towards Tito’s assessments and to determine the political responsibility of individuals. The very next day the PC reacted by calling Popović’s statements insinuations. Even before Dušan Popović, Paško Romac condemned the attitudes of Vojvodinian representatives at

¹² AV, fund 334, Minutes from the meeting of the leadership of the SR of Serbia with President Tito of 9 October 1972.

¹³ He himself confessed that Stevan Doronjski told him this classified piece of information. Popović 2006: 608-613.

the meeting with Tito, while the statement of the Novi Sad committee was supported by the Sremska Mitrovica committee, as well as the organization of veterans and reserve officers. The meeting of the PC, when Čanadanović received support for the last time, was held on 25 October, the same day when it was announced that Marko Nikezić and Latinka Perović resigned.

Five days later, the position of Vojvodinian liberals was further shaken when the powerful Stane Dolanc, during the meeting of the presidency of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, “took into protection” the Novi Sad party organization.¹⁴ During November there were several meetings of the highest party organs in Vojvodina, which did not produce any results. Meanwhile, one by one, the members of the Secretariat of the PC began to “waver” and started taking the side of the opposition. When, in late November the *Adoption of conclusions on the situation and tasks of the LCV in achieving the Letters of the President of the LCY and the Executive Board of the Presidency of the LCY and the speech of Comrade Tito* was placed on the agenda of the PC, Mirko Čanadanović was one of the few who did not hesitate to repeat his positive attitudes about the former republic party leadership.¹⁵

As time went on, the Vojvodinian party leadership could clearly see that their days were numbered. Faced with the dwindling support from the Secretariat of the PC and being opposed by the coalition of Belgrade centralists and Novi Sad autonomists, without the expected support of Tito, on 18 December 1972 Mirko Čanadanović and Miloš Radojčin resigned. A few days later, Dušan Alimpić was elected President of the PC. He was the only opposition politician who had “survived” the 14th conference three years earlier. As the head of the provincial party organization in the coming years he would lead a campaign against the liberals and as a former police officer he would apply drastic methods in doing so.

The public discrediting of the former leadership began already after the New Year’s Eve. It was accused of poor organization and action competence of the League of Communists; of insufficient affirmation of the workers’ work groups and neglecting this issue; of the occurrence of factionalism and sectarianism, elitism and phraseology; of an adverse social and ethnic structure of the League of Communists and weaknesses in its transformation; of isolation of the new management of the LCS and the LCY; of neglecting the class and moral-political criteria in the personnel policy; of technocracy and liberalism, and, last but not least, of insufficient efforts in defending the autonomy of Vojvodina.

At a meeting of the Secretariat of the PC in early January 1973 the preparations for the 52nd session of the PC were on the agenda. On that occasion Milan Mali denied that the leadership of Serbia ensured the development of autonomy claiming that this development was the result of the overall transformation of the constitutional structure of Yugoslavia and that the CC of the LCS just held the course of the LCY, “but during that course they attempted to present themselves as a somewhat progressive wing in the entire the process and in that state”. Dušan Alimpić stated that the claim about the danger threatening

¹⁴ Čanadanović claims that Stane Dolanc falsely represented in the media the discussion at the meeting of the Presidency of the LCY and that the change of the leadership of Vojvodinian liberals was also desired by Edvard Kardelj. Čanadanović also writes that he was offered, from the highest places, Nikezić’s position but he refused it arguing that Vojvodinian personnel at that time occupied the position of the President of the Executive Council of Serbia and of the republic Council of Syndicates. Čanadanović 2012: 111-114.

¹⁵ AV, fund 334, Minutes from the meeting of the PC of the LCV of 22 November 1972.

Vojvodina in case of the change of the leadership of the CC of the LCS was “implanted” and that it should be dealt with at the level of the political work group, where it was “still developing, elaborating, dosing in such a way that the team who left were the only ones who had the right attitude towards autonomy and the national question”.¹⁶

The situation was similar at the end of January, at the 52nd meeting of the PC, when the *Critical evaluation of the work of the PC of the LCV in implementing the tasks from the letter of the President of the LCY and the Executive Bureau of the Presidency of the LCY and comrade Tito's speech to the political work group of the Republic of Serbia* was examined and elaborated by the new secretary of the PC Jon Srbovan. Using lack of information as an excuse, members of the PC condemned all the attitudes of the former leadership who they had unanimously supported during the previous years – including the one about the merits of the former republic party leadership concerning the development of the autonomy of the provinces. The same thing happened at the beginning of February, at the meeting with the Vojvodinian party members who had various functions in the republic and federal administration, when liberals were even accused of a “compromise” with the great Serbian hegemony by Jovan Veselinov, the same person who had been identified in such a way in Vojvodina.

In the months that followed an intensive campaign against the Liberals was announced that would challenge all aspects of the activities of the former leadership. Hence, Dušan Popović criticized Mirko Čanadanović because of an insufficiently resolute demeanor during the constitutional reform: “The former president of the PC of the LCV vigorously advocated the attitude of the republic party leadership that relations between the republics and provinces should be regulated primarily through the republic constitution. It was explained by the fact that it could be difficult to accept that the republic constitution would regulate in more detail the relations between the republic and provinces, because it would mean proscribing the type of behavior for that republic which has autonomous provinces, placing it in a different position in comparison with other republics, which would be unequal. Such a decision would imply, given the balance of power, the narrowing of the positions and functions of the autonomous provinces in relation to the concept and solutions from the federation.”¹⁷

The highlight of the campaign against the Liberals was the adoption of the report *Implementation of the current political ideas and tasks and the fight against faction actions in the LCV* by the PC in mid-June 1973. The report was full of various objections concerning the activities of the ousted leadership, including the familiar charges in connection with the constitutional position of Vojvodina. Dušan Alimpić did not fail to repeat at the 15th Conference of the LCV in April 1974 that Vojvodinian liberals used “factional methods and gimmicks to begin one of the most shameful political manipulations with the autonomous position of our province”. According to him, the former provincial party leaders were guilty because “in reality they denied autonomy, and while speaking they were demagogically portrayed as its supporters; they denied the properties of the Province as a constituent factor of the Federation; they tied the position of Vojvodina to the political fate of the liberal

¹⁶ AV, fund 334, Minutes from the meeting of the Secretariat of the PC of the LCV of 3 January 1973.

¹⁷ *Politika*, Belgrade, 16 February 1973.

leadership in the LCS and the LCY. They threatened with an inter-ethnic division in Vojvodina if it endangered the monopoly position of the liberal leadership in the LCS and the LCV...¹⁸

The 15th Conference had an elective character and a new leadership of Vojvodinian Communists was elected then. Dušan Alimpić remained the President of the PC and Nandor Major was elected the Secretary. In the spring of 1974 Radovan Vlajković became the President of the Presidency of the SAP of Vojvodina, Vilmoš Molnar became the President of the Provincial Assembly and Nikola Kmezić became the President of the Executive Council of Vojvodina. Jon Srbovan assumed the position of the President of the Chamber of Commerce, Bogdan Crevar assumed the position of the President of the Socialist Union, and Predrag Vladislavljević assumed the position of the President of the Union of Vojvodina. Their supporters were sent to prominent positions in the federal and republic institutions, which belonged to Vojvodina according to the principle of parity, proclaimed in the just adopted constitution from 1974.

The process of the constitutional reform in the period 1967-1974, which besides the adoption of the new constitution, included the previous acceptance of the three sets of amendments to the constitution from 1963, also included Vojvodinian liberals in full compliance with the Belgrade party leadership. So at the end of March 1968 a joint meeting of the Presidency and the Executive Committee of the PC discussed the information concerning the progress of discussions on constitutional matters “with a special emphasis on the constitutional regulation of the status of the province”. Mirko Čanadanović acquainted the participants with the work of the provincial commission, as well as its cooperation with the republic commission and presented the coordinated views of the two commissions: that the autonomies are independent self-governing socio-political communities in the self-governing and federal structure of Yugoslavia; that autonomies should have economic independence and directly participate in the expenses of the joint functions of the Republic and indirectly in the expenses of the Yugoslav federation; that they deserve to have the right of self-organization, which must be in accordance with “the needs of citizens, nations and ethnic minorities in their respective areas and interests that communes have in the autonomous provinces”.

Čanadanović announced that in future discussions they would discuss whether the autonomies in the Federal Constitution should be laid out in the form of a special constitutional category or in the part which covers the republics. He also said they needed to discuss “who should determine the sources and amount of income for the relevant socio-political communities in general and then for autonomies”, as well as in which cases the Provinces could have the possibility for self-organization on the basis of the federal rules and in which cases on the basis of the republic regulation. Finally, he mentioned some “less important” issues (the status of the provincial delegation to the Council of Peoples, the status of the Constitutional Court, the status of the Supreme Court, whether the normative acts in the provinces are called decisions or laws etc.). He pointed out that autonomies would presumably get their Supreme courts, but not Constitutional ones, “and that they probably did not need the Constitutional Court”.

¹⁸ AV, fund 334, Minutes from the 15th conference of the LCV held on 18 and 19 April 1974.

On that occasion the Vojvodinian party leadership was informed that “there are certain differences in the relationship towards the status of autonomy between Kosmet and Vojvodina”, mostly because the issue of the Kosovo-Metohija autonomy was “to a greater extent seen as a national-political issue due to the national structure in question and because of the political situation in that area, while in the case of Vojvodina this issue is intersected to a much greater extent and much more primarily with socio-economic elements”. Čanadanović also said that Vojvodinian negotiators in Belgrade openly stated that they considered their platform “politically and historically realistic, that we do not have backup views and that we do not approach the talks with a conviction that we are making more modest requirements in order not to cause doubts, at the same time counting secretly that someone will express better programs so that, by the nature of seeking a medium solution, we can get more”. He expressed a negative experience of the conducted interviews – facing two extreme political points of view: first, “whether the strengthening of autonomy means the weakening of the republic and even the separation of three practically autonomous units: Kosmet, Vojvodina and Serbia proper, or whether autonomy should be practically given the status of the republic, and the second one, which resents that we are insufficiently using the current democratized political situation to ensure greater independence of Vojvodina as an autonomy”.¹⁹

The adoption of Conclusions of the Third Conference of the LCS in early March 1971 did not eliminate the divisions concerning the issue of constitutional amendments, both those between the republics and provinces as well as those within the republic leadership and Vojvodinian leadership. At the extended meeting of the Presidency and the Executive Committee of the Provincial Conference of the Socialist Alliance of the Working People (SAWP) of Vojvodina held immediately after the Third Conference, Mirko Čanadanović warned that autonomy “is not and should not become a republic, simply because the citizens of Vojvodina have a republic – socialist Serbia. However, autonomy is not and never can be a province in Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. We repeat that because of possible autonomists in Vojvodina and centralists in Serbia, not because we think it’s problematic among working people or unclear in the orientation of the leading socio-political forces in the province and the Republic”. Čanadanović’s remark about the two extremes caused a reaction of Zora Krstonošić, who assessed the “autonomism of 1962” as positive, “because it was seen as a struggle against centralism, against a conservative current that made the changes impossible in our constitution on the basis of self-management”.

The other participants in the debate touched upon the relations between the republics and provinces, so Aleksandar Fira reminded everyone of the fact that the affirmation of the autonomy of the province goes “if not at the same pace, same speed, same steps, but essentially parallel to the affirmation of the new relations in the Yugoslav federalism, or if you will, primarily with the affirmation of the republic as an independent and constituent member of the Yugoslav federation. It is very important precisely because it can and should take off the mortgage from whether the development of the autonomy of the province or the development of the statehood of the republic is further away, that these are not categories

¹⁹ AV, fund 334, Minutes from the meeting of the Presidency and Executive Committee of the PC of the LCV of 26 March 1968.

that are mutually conflicting”. Mirko Tepavac further stated that “realistically, a province could not achieve more with guarantees than through negotiation, communication and pooling their interests in the republic and with the republic. It is more realistic and more than could be achieved with super guarantees or, as Mirko Čanadanović very accurately and vividly said several times, with submitting their requisition on the federation counter”.

Following the information that the representatives of the Republic gave in and fully accepted the draft of the constitutional amendments and, faced with the determination of all others in the Constitutional Commission, gave up their objections, the Belgrade public resonated with a number of negative comments (Mihailo Ćurić etc.). Mirko Čanadanović reacted to that stating that after the Third Conference of the LCS the questions about the organization of the Republic and the position of the provinces both in the republic and in the federation were “politically sanitized” and that they achieved a unanimous attitude. “If someone still thinks it would be better for the Socialist Republic of Serbia if there was no autonomy, that’s their business and they cannot have greater influence. What they can do is complain to history. I would also add: neither Serbs in Vojvodina need someone from the outside to add the national awareness, nor is there any ground for anyone to be concerned about the attitude of other nations and ethnic minorities in Vojvodina towards the unity of the SR Serbia as a state and socio-political community. It is very important that the young people in some of these discussions have distanced themselves from some of their teachers. The opinions that ‘complications’ should be reduced by ‘tying’ Vojvodina only to the Federation have almost no influence here”, said Čanadanović in an interview for *Politika*.²⁰

However, the last stage of the constitutional reform in Vojvodina was implemented by the new provincial “personnel”. In fact, as we have seen, at the end of 1972 there were changes in the leadership of the PC and in the next year at the level of other Vojvodinian political forums – the changes that had previously been unwitnessed in the otherwise very rich history of Vojvodinian party purges in terms of the number of leaders that they included, the weight of the charges that were used on this occasion, as well as the brutality with which they were carried out (with the exception of the conflict with the Cominform). The attack on the leadership of the PC and its fall did not come unexpectedly and suddenly, but actually represented the culmination of the many years of factional fighting that was led within the League of Communists of Vojvodina.

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СЛОБОДАН БЈЕЛИЦА

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УСПОН И ПАД ВОЈВОЂАНСКИХ ЛИБЕРАЛА

Резиме

Више од четири деценије је прошло од пада војвођанских либерала, о коме се толико мало зна а толико много полемисе. Јесу ли то биле године од којих је кренуо суноврат југословенске федерације, или је то био почетак „златног доба“ аутономне Војводине? Да ли је подела у вези са аутономијом, настала унутар војвођанске партијске организације током уставне реформе, била фракцијски сукоб уобичајен за комунисте или њени корени сежу још у новембар 1918. године? Нису ли они који су себе називали браниоцима аутономије у ствари бранили своју власт, а они који су ту власт нападали заправо хтели да укину аутономију? Уставне распре, несугласице због економског развоја, унутарпартијске интриге, све су то елементи овог сукоба. Историјом Војводине шездесетих и седамдесетих година двадесетог века до сада су се, са посебним акцентом на питању њене аутономије, бавили само Ранко Кончар и Димитрије Боаров, пишући обимну биографију Стевана Доронског. Будући да наша историографија врло опрезно напредује у истраживању историје социјалистичке Југославије, поменути хронолошки период је био тема тек малог броја чланака и монографија. Међу њима се својом објективношћу и озбиљношћу издвајају синтетичка студија Љубодрага Димића о аспектима српске државности у југословенском оквиру, те други том зборника докумената који се односе на развој југословенског федерализма, састављача Бранка Петрановића и Момчила Зечевића. На сву срећу, од историчара су били смелији учесници политичког живота друге половине двадесетог века. У форми дневника, мемоара, интервјуа или у неком другом облику, драгоцене сведочанства оставили су: Душан Поповић, Мирко Чанадановић, Стеван Доронски, Мирко Тепавац, Латинка Перовић, Драгослав Марковић, Душан Чкребић итд. Свакако да ове аутобиографске изворе историчар мора да користи са одређеном дозом скепсе. Поузданији историјски извор представљала је необјављена архивска документација из Архива Војводине,

богат и слабо истражен фонд Покрајинског комитета Савеза комуниста Војводине. У намери да створимо уравнотежену и свеобухватну слику, прегледали смо све бројеве београдске Политике од 1967. до 1974. године.

Кључне речи: Војводина, Југославија, либерали, Србија, политика.

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