

heritage, the book written by professor Svetozar Boškov will surely have application in many future research studies.

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Kosta Nikolić, *A lost history – Serbia in the 20th century*, Službeni glasnik, Beograd, 2016, pp. 418.

(Kosta Nikolić, *Jedna izgubljena istorija – Srbija u 20. veku*, Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2016, 418 str.)

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Serbian historian Kosta Nikolić, an expert on the history of Serbs in Yugoslavia during the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century, is an author of a dozen books on this topic (which include all segments of the politics and life of Serbs in Yugoslavias in the period 1918-1991). He wrote a valuable and important book with an effective and provocative title *A lost history – Serbia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century* and presented to the scientific audience the results of his many years of research and pondering. The very title of the book immediately provides readers with a topic for consideration and personal questioning of their impressions and knowledge on the Serbian (lost) 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The book is divided into seven wholes, methodologically it is impeccable, written in an excellent style and keeps the reader occupied and focused in the real sense of the words. The authors writes and describes the events in a vivid and impressive manner, while his analyses are impartial, mathematically precise, in the manner of every good historian – *sine ira et studio*. The first segment (the chapter *Serbia or Yugoslavia*, pp. 15-47) provides an analysis of the attitude Serbs had towards the idea of Yugoslavism and the creation of Yugoslavia. It offers the descriptions of the war suffering of Serbia in the Great War, the attitudes of Allies towards Serbia, of the relations of Serbian and Croatian politicians and the signals of the first serious political trouble which would occur in the first years of the creation of Yugoslavia. Leaning on

political pragmatism and the concept of the Croatian state and historical right, immediately after the creation of the new state in 1918 the Croatian political elite started relativizing war victories of Serbia and imposing themselves as a dominant political factor, which is one the key topics of the second chapter (*A nation with three names*, pp. 47-85). The author skillfully and precisely defines the wrong paths of Serbian politics and wanderings of the Serbian elite led by Pašić and King Aleksandar Karađorđević, who were opposed by a demagogue and leader of the Croatian movement Stjepan Radić. Torn between a Serbian and Yugoslav feeling, between a Serbian idea and an affection towards the new state, Serbian politicians did not manage to define national politics and clearly and precisely determine the aims of the Serbian politics in Yugoslavia, unlike Croats. The attempts of King Aleksandar to employ the politics of integral Yugoslavism in order to change things and solve the national issue failed, but the disorientation of Serbian political parties became even greater. The murder of King Aleksandar (1934) took away a ruler with a strong personality, who tried to find a way out of a nonplus. The arrival of the capable Milan Stojadinović (1935) did not solve the Serbian issue, but it did accelerate the solution of the Croatian issue, which would be completed by the creation of the Banate of Croatia (1939). Disoriented and demoralised, the Serbian political elite gathered around the Serbian Cultural Club tried to adapt to the new reality and provide a better solution for the Serbian issue, but the beginning of the Second World War (1939) first made the situation more complicated and finally completely blocked everything due to the March events of 1941. The tragedy of Serbs in Yugoslavia had only just begun.

In the chapter *In the Second World War* (pp. 85-155) the author Kosta Nikolić writes about the history of the Serbian tragedy symbolized in the civil war, occupation, crimes in the Independent State of Croatia, civil crimes, political conflicts and the defeat of the Serbian idea, which is simultaneously a synonym of the entire era. The chapter was written concisely and without excess

details and since the author dealt with the topic of Serbs in the Second World War in several of his books, the text is syncretic in character and captures the reader with vivid details and precise data. The communist revolution disguised in the principles of antifascism (aided by the USSR) was conducted unscrupulously and firmly, as opposed to the badly organized and poorly coordinated fight of the Yugoslav Homeland Army symbolized by general Dragoljub Mihailović. The great powers made a clear decision that the partisan leader Tito was a more adequate person to support (since he had the USSR behind him), so the issue of the civil war and revolution was settled beyond the Serbian borders. The Serbian idea was defeated and stigmatized by a matrix of the great Serbian hegemony in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (a slogan taken from the aggressive rhetoric of Austro-Hungarian external politics before the First World War), which solved the national issue for a very long period in Tito's Yugoslavia. The author did not spare the Serbian elite from the moment of the creation of Yugoslavia since he listed many of the crimes committed by partisan units in the period 1944-1945.

*In the communist Yugoslavia* (pp. 155-215) is the title of the next chapter where the author writes about the single-party system personified in the personality of Josip Broz Tito, then about the role of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in the spheres of daily life, the processes of a mythological matrix of the creation of a personality cult after the model of Stalin, as well as the departure from Stalin's politics. Nikolić is clear in that respect and says that although Broz disrupted his relationship with Stalin, the principle of ruling and managing the country essentially never changed, which the author proved by several dozen examples. The crisis of Yugoslavism, federalism, frequent constitutional changes, and poor international relations are also in the author's focus, as well as the fall of Ranković (1966), the fall of Serbian liberals (1972), and Broz's disavowal of the attempts to modernize Yugoslav economy. Tito's opposition to everything that reminded him of western liberalism, democracy and free market was more

than clear and the consequences emerged already after his death in May 1980. The social crisis began almost momentarily. An artificial preservation of the personality cult was a smoke screen for covering up inflation, unemployment, the Albanian rebellion in Kosovo and Metohija (1981) and many economic and national problems which shook Yugoslavia. Again the same thing happened like before the beginning of the Second World War, the state was dying and the Serbian political elite, deeply involved in communism, had no solution.

The next segment, *Disintegration of Yugoslavia* (pp. 215-280) is written in a methodologically concise and articulate manner and the author presents to the readership the key factors in the disintegration of the Yugoslav state: economic crisis, unsolved national issue, antagonism between Serbs and Croats, Albanian movement for independence, and explains the role of the new communist ruler in Serbia, Slobodan Milošević. The author is particularly critical of Milošević, who he claims was a model of a new communist dictator, an unscrupulous man with no sense of global politics, who skillfully used force to solve Serbian internal issues (the change of the constitution in 1989) and elevated himself to the pedestal of the president of Serbia with a great support. After that he began the process of imposing his will to rearrange Yugoslavia, which imminently led to its disintegration and took the Serbian people to a new national tragedy. The author analyzes political details from the period 1989-1991 writing about Milošević's mistakes and superficiality, which originated precisely from his personal political beliefs and the profile of a communist dictator who was ready to fight to preserve Yugoslavia in his own standards. Milošević did not see or feel the fight for Great Serbia as the accomplishment of his political goal. The idea of Yugoslavia as a state which was the bastion of communism (the so-called libertarianism), at the time of the fall of the Berlin wall (1989) and the union of Europe (1991-1992), led Milošević into wars with Slovenia (1991) and Croatia (1991-1992). When we look at Milošević's refusal to reasonably see the

participation of the great forces in the solution of the Yugoslav crisis, which testifies of his personality and character, unrealistic ideas and irrational politics, all this led to the fact that at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Serbs became a marginalized and isolated nation without a single ally and with small chances of political survival.

The chapter *In isolation* (pp. 281-313) is effective and dynamic. Milošević's politics is described as a destructive, disoriented communist dictatorship during which Serbia suffered in wrong wars led by Milošević in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995), which was followed by internal unrest and protests against Milošević, which provoked a violent reaction (1992, 1996-1997). The author also mentions the strengthening of Mirjana Marković's influence through JUL, the rise of extremist Vojislav Šešelj (SRS) and the national security and police who often served the private purposes of the Milošević-Marković couple. The author uses facts to prove the devastating effects of the discord between the Serbian opposition and elite, especially emphasizing the break-down of Serbia in the NATO bombing (1999), followed by Milošević's fall (5 October 2000). Nikolić also offers a retrospective of the results of the temperamental and capable prime minister Zoran Đinđić, PhD, murdered on 12 March 2003, which completes the tragic circle of Serbian rulers and politicians who died in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The tragedy of the Serbian elite and wrong politics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century culminated in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the author stresses. The segment *Montenegrin independence – end of the Serbian 20<sup>th</sup> century* (pp. 313-351) portrays the history and politics of a once proud Serbian state in Montenegro, its rises and falls in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the civil war (1941-1945) and especially the turbulent events in the period 1989-1991. He singles out the main protagonists of these events, Milo Đukanović and Momir Bulatović and presents their ideas and political goals from the attack of Montenegro on Dubrovnik until the crisis in the relations with Serbia (1991) and the creation of FR Yugoslavia (1992). The political antagonism between Đukanović and Milošević, which began in 1996-1997, halted the

development of this federation, which led to the formation of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in 2002-2003, which stopped existing in May 2006. The author presents the relations between Serbia and Montenegro in a balanced and objective way.

The final chapter, *Outcome of the Serbian 20<sup>th</sup> century* (pp. 351-379) is presented in the form of a retrospective on the text of the book and a completely new analysis of the demographic loss of Serbs in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the (entire) wrong Yugoslav politics, the inability of the Serbian elite to cope with the processes of Yugoslav integrations and disintegrations, the downfall of the Serbian idea, the fatal influence of communism on Serbs in general, and the impossibility to define the place of Serbia on the political map of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe. The author clearly and unequivocally says that the Serbian lost 20<sup>th</sup> century brought catastrophic demographical, economic, intellectual and national consequences, many of which seem to have left a deep mark on the historical conscience of Serbs in general, while in perspective the new challenges and future are fairly uncertain.

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