
REVIEWS

Victor Neumann, *The Banat of Timosoara – a European Melting Pot*, London: Scala Arts & Heritage Publishers Ltd, 2019, 496 pages.

Banat of Timosoara – a European Melting Pot, a book of 496 pages, was published in 2019 in London by Scala Arts & Heritage Publishers Ltd. on the eve of 2021, when Timosoara would be the European Capital of Culture. The book is the result of many years of collective effort of several historians, art historians, philologists, museologists and other scholars from Romania, Serbia and Hungary, among whom professor Victor Neumann from Timosoara, editor of the book, played the most important role. This luxuriously equipped and beautifully illustrated book consists of 22 chapters and a conclusion, written by the following authors: Razvan Theodorescu, Laszlo Marjanucz, Gabriel Szekely, Teodor Octavian Gheorghiu, Mihaela Vlasceanu, Adrian Negru, Aron Kovacs, Vasile Dudas, Grozdanka Gojkov, Miodrag Milin, Slobodan Bjelica and Victor Neumann, who was the author of the more than half of the chapters.

It is very important for readers that in the foreword Razvan Theodorescu describes Banat as a 'geographical, conceptual, historical and anthropological construct' with the following characteristics: triple border; European region; a cultural bridge and a connectivity space. In the same sense, in the preface the editor Victor Neumann explains his methodological concept – overcoming the religious, linguistic and cultural prejudices and the limitations of tackling of the history of Banat exclusively as a paradigm of nationality for the purpose of constructing a complete plausible normative of the past of the Banat region (as one fragment of an imperial, multi- and intercultural world) – from a position of dialogue among the historiographies of the three neighbouring countries.

Likewise, in the first chapter (*Between Orthodox Byzantium and Catholic Europe*) Victor Neumann suggests that in Banat, even in the early modern age, pluralism rather than singularity was dominant, and that then created the regional identity of Banat and the civic spirit of Timosoara survived the partition of Banat in 1918. In the second chapter (*Timosoara under the sign of Prince Eugene of Savoy*), Victor Neumann convincingly proves that the administrative and economic advantages of Banat were born during the Habsburg rule from the 18th century as well as that the rise of Timosoara started then. In the next two chapters (*The Enlightenment and the policies of the Habsburg Empire – case studies of Transylvania and the Banat and Josephism and Josephinism as Modernizing Reforms*) Neumann considers the concept of "enlightenment", whose ideas had been spread to Banat, quoting that it made Banat a unique political, industrial, agrarian, demographical and cultural experiment at the gates of Central Europe. Timosoara itself experienced a series of radical changes as a result of its inclusion in the imperial fortification system, which also improved the inclusion of the local population in Europe.

The following two chapters (*Administration, Colonization and Culture and The Political Strategies in the House of Habsburg in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century*) were written by Laszlo Marjanucz and they deal with cameralism as an economic doctrine and an ideological background, as well as with the administrative status of Banat in the 18th century – distinguishing important years: 1717, 1779 and 1781 (the year when Timosoara was made only Royal Free City of the Region). Gabriel Szekely wrote a chapter under the title *The architecture of the Royal Free Cities of Timosoara and Banat*, in which he stipulated that the urban development of Banat settlements was consciously planned and that Timosoara was designed as a city on the drawing board. Teodor Octavian Gheorghiu (in *The rural*

Banat and the Habsburg administration) analyzes four phases of colonization in Banat, concluding that after the instauration of the Habsburg administration a network of existing settlements was doubled.

The next two chapters refer to the art in Banat in the 18th century (Mihaela Vlasceanu: *Regional characteristics of Baroque art in Banat* and Adrian Negru: *Painting workshops*), proving that through rapid economic transformation of Banat, introducing innovation, modernity and openness, the Habsburg administration conferred a dynamic effect on local traditional culture. In addition, due to the fact that Banat lies on an 'occidental cultural corridor' it boasts a true 'synthesis of civilization' – including Baroque as a phenomenon of European culture and civilization. That Banat was not only a region in which craft and trades prospered, but also one which was concerned with intellectual emancipation, is demonstrated by Neumann in the chapter *The German-language press and the Imperial ideology*, which again emphasizes the importance of the freedom of expression in Timisoara as a multi-confessional, multilingual and cosmopolitan modern European city. The overall progress of Banat in the 18th and 19th centuries was accompanied by the process of modernization of the Banat schooling system, as indicated by Grozdanka Gojkov in the chapter *The educational system in Banat under the Habsburg administration*.

The revolutionary year of 1848 caused a division of population of Banat based on confessional and ethnic criteria. Miodrag Milin wrote about *The Revolutionary Movements of 1848*, drawing the readers' attention to the different perceptions of the concept of freedom, emphasizing Romanian dilemmas of that time. The next chapter, *From Habsburg centralism to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy* (written by Victor Neumann) discusses changes within the Habsburg Empire in the 19th century and their impact on the political and sociocultural life in Banat. This was not only a multicultural and multilingual region, but also place of multi-confessional cohabitation as we learn from Neumann's chapter *Religious reforms and the political emancipation of Jews in Banat*. The late 19th and early 20th century was the age in which

the Banat school network was modernized just enough to meet local needs (with the exception of university studies), as we can read in Aron Kovac's chapter *The educational system in Banat during the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy*.

The next two chapters, written by Vasile Dudas and Slobodan Bjelica (*Banat and Romania at the end of the First World War* and *The partition of Banat in 1918–1919*) deal with the Great War and its aftermath. Both authors agree that the dispute between Hungary, Romania and Serbia and the partition of Banat among those three countries ignored the regional peculiarities resulting from the synthesis of several linguistic groups, cultures, religions and traditions formed within the context of the Austrian civilization. History of the Romanian part of Banat in the 20th century is described in following chapters: *Interwar Timisoara – the Multi- and Intercultural Capital of a Euro-Region*, *The Treatment of Jews in Banat during the Second World War – the Deportation Plan*, *The reconstruction of civil society under the National Communist Dictatorship 1956–1989* and *The Anti-Totalitarian Revolt of 1989 – the Role of Timisoara*. Victor Neumann, the author of those four chapters, estimates that at the time of the domination of radical ideologies on Romanian and European political scenes, Timisoara cultivated its civic spirit and its citizens retained a set of civil values they had held from the time of the Habsburgs despite the demographic changes that followed the world wars. That was the reason why Timisoara, as a regional centre with a strong tradition, had been the first Romanian city to understand the necessity of the change of Chausescu's regime.

In the end the editor concludes that today Timisoara searches for 'a new cultural and social identity', which must be based on the long tradition of peaceful cohabitation, bi- and trilingualism, multiculturalism and an open society in this part of Europe. Although it was the first time that the authors from our three neighbouring countries participated in the writing of one region, the book does not represent Banat from special national corners, but from a European perspective. In that sense, it can be a

model for writing the history of other European regions, amongst them Vojvodina, whose capital is Novi Sad, which is a twin city to Timisoara.

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Slavica Popović Filipović, *The Great War Revisited*, Valjevo: Istorijski arhiv, 2017, 273 pages.

(Slavica Popović Filipović, *Svedočanstva iz Prvog svetskog rata*, Valjevo: Istorijski arhiv, 2017, 273 str.)

The history of the Great War has become even more enhanced in the Centennial Year since the end of the War thanks to the publication of the book *'The Great War Revisited'* by Slavica Popović Filipović. According to the author, 'the book is dedicated to heroes, heroines, humanists, and philanthropists from all around the world, and in memory and great respect for all charitable deeds and noble sacrifices made to the Serbian people in the most turbulent time in the First World War'.

The author has written the history of foreign medical missions and philanthropy in Serbia during the First World War on 258 pages. The revision (pages 259–260) was done by Velibor Vidić, a historian from Valjevo, the translations were done by Bob Filipović, while the author's words of gratitude follow up on pages 261–262. The references are on the final pages (263–273). The photo illustration of the Scottish Women's Hospital on the front and back cover give an additional dimension to the text inside. This monographic book is divided into two discrete parts that are complementarily interrelated.

The first part of the book, *The Foreign Medical Missions in Serbia during the First World War*, encompasses medical assistance from Russia, France, the United States, Greece, Holland, Denmark, the Czech Republic, and the British hospitals and individual humanitarians. Special attention is given to the medical

assistance from Russia and the medical missions that came to Serbia to provide medical assistance – The Mission of the Petrograd Slavic Humanitarian Society headed by Dr. Nikolay Ivanovich Sichev and other Russian medical missions. The greatest portion of the first part of the book involves the British medical assistance by the Scottish Women's Hospitals for Foreign Service headed by Dr. Elsie Maud Inglis. These were located in Serbia, Russia, Dobruja, the Salonica Front, and in France. As well as the Serbian Relief Fund Units in: Skopje (two units), Kragujevac, Belgrade, Požarevac, Corfu, the Salonica Front, Corsica, and Tunisia – both during the war, and after, and other British medical missions. The rest of the first part of the book relates to medical missions and assistance from France, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, and Japan.

The second part of the book relates to the humanitarians, volunteers, and philanthropists, who came to help the Serbian people, such as: Mihajlo Pupin, Dr. Elsie Maud Inglis, Mr. John Frothingham and Mrs Jelena Lozanić Frothingham, Sir Thomas Lipton, Lady Paget and Sir Ralph Spencer Paget, Dr. Ludvik Hirschfeld, Dr. Catherine MacPhail, Dr. Isobel Emslie Lady Hutton, Mrs Mabel St. Clair Stobart, Madam Mabel Grouitch and Mr. Slavko Grouitch, Dr. Rosalie Slaughter Morton, Dr. William Hunter, Dr. Edward William Ryan, Dr. Sergei Kvantilianovich Sofoterov, Dr. Nikolai Ivanovich Sichev, Mrs Alexandra Pavlovna Hartvig, Honorable Evelina Haverfield, Miss Olive Kelso King and Sir George Kelso King, Miss Annie Christitch, Mrs Hanna Henkin Hardy, Miss Flora Sandes, Mrs Helen Harley Jenkins, Lady Cornelia Wimbourne, who sent help or came to Serbia all the way from the Pacific and the Atlantic to the Balkans, during the most perilous period of the First World War.

In addition to all the above named, this chapter also includes passages about the typhoid epidemic: *'The Terrible Truth about Serbia'*, by Sir Thomas Lipton, *The Springtime in Vranje After the War* by Dr. Isabel Emslie, Lady Hutton, *All Women Doctors, Hospital Under Shellfire and the Serbian Character* by Dr. Agnes Bennett, Australian doctor, *Experiences in Serbia, 1914–*