

sense of isolation experienced by soldiers and the roads taken by prisoners of war taken by the Austro-Hungarian army that Scheer describes also add an important element to this mosaic. Disloyalty and suspicions of treason—both related to issues around ethnicity—undoubtedly affected how the army operated during the Great War, which Scheer very competently analyzes. Archival sources provide the basis for a nuanced picture of the complex problems faced by the Austro-Hungarian soldiers fighting in World War I.

Dr. Tamara Scheer's monograph represents a major milestone for research into the Austro-Hungarian army. Her analyses and conclusions are as original as they are well-substantiated by sound historical sources. *Die Sprachenvielfalt in der österreichisch-ungarischen Armee (1867–1918)* is highly recommended reading and an abundant source of inspiration for further exploration into the topics it addresses. Dr. Scheer's conclusions have come as a result of years of research and analysis and place her among the leading scholars of the history of the Habsburg Monarchy.

Goran Vasin

doi: 10.19090/i.2024.35.255-258

© Faculty of Philosophy, Novi Sad, 2024

ISTRAŽIVANJA – JOURNAL OF HISTORICAL RESEARCHES 35, 255-258

Danijel Radović, *Jovan Ristić (1829–1899): A Biography of Serbian Statesman*, Novi Sad: Prometej, 2023, 721 pages.

(Danijel Radović, *Jovan Rajić (1829–1899). Biografija srpskog državnika*, Novi Sad: Prometej, 2023, 721 str.)

It is difficult even to enumerate all the roles played by Jovan Ristić, who was without question one of the most prominent political figures in nineteenth century Serbia. His presence in Serbian political life began with Serbian Uprising of 1848 as a student and revolutionary. Ristić later served as the Serbian envoy to Constantinople and twice as regent, helped draft a new constitution, served as prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, was the head of the

Liberal Party and the Serbian Royal Academy, among others. He was a rarity among his contemporaries - a *homo plurae tempi* - one of the rare personalities who found himself at the pinnacle of the Serbian political establishment at different and consequential times. Unlike other figures with similar qualities, for instance Nikola Hristić - the Summary criminal courts man - Ristić was able to maintain his position by taking a balanced approach toward the crown, which meant being neither too humble nor too defiant in his dealings with the head of state.

Considering all this, it is no wonder that parts of Ristić's life and work have been the subject of a vast number of scholarly works. However, despite the tremendous amount of existing literature, there are regrettably very few comprehensive biographies of this distinguished statesman. This leaves open an opportunity to fill this existing vacuum, but it also leaves scholars vulnerable to criticisms of conducting insufficient research.

Danijel Radović, a research associate at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade has authored a 721 page monograph on Jovan Ristić's life and work entitled *Jovan Ristić (1829–1899): biografija srpskog državnika*, published in Novi Sad in 2023 by Prometej, which has successfully filled this intolerable vacuum in Serbian historiography with extensive research that leaves almost no room for potential criticism.

Despite the Radović's modest statement that "one should not hold the belief that a few hundred pages will reveal everything about Ristić" (p. 20), his book covers every significant part of Ristić's public and private life, starting with convincing evidence of 1829 as the year of his birth rather than 1831, which has even been carved on his tombstone (p. 29).

The book comprises seventeen chapters organized chronologically, and except for the introduction (*Uvod: povesnik i biografija*) and conclusion (*Zaključak: srećna zvezda državnika*), each is divided into subsections. The titles of the chapters and subsections explain their content very concisely (for instance, "Ustav 'od korica do korica'" [The Constitution from Cover to Cover], an extract from King Milan's statement at the beginning of the constitutional convention in 1888

explaining how this new supreme legal act should be adopted). Radović's monograph is on sound footing drawn from all relevant published and unpublished sources, literature, and the press. There are several groups of sources the author drew from to illustrate Ristić's life and work in its totality that are of particular significance. Examples of these are archivalia from Heidelberg University, which contain Ristić's autobiography (see, for example, the subsection "Srpski sokak na Neckaru" [A Serbian *sokak* on the Neckar], documents kept in the Prussian Secret State Archives of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation referenced in the subsection "Spectemur agendo," and the Political Archives of Foreign Service referenced in the subsection subchapter "Promisao Božja i ljudski razum" [God's Providence and Human Reason], both in Berlin, and Ristić's legacy preserved in the private belongings of his descendants referenced in the subsection "Iza zatvorenih vrata - portret i porodica" [Behind Closed Doors - A Portrait and A Family]).

Radović has also successfully avoided the potential pitfall of writing a monograph solely of interest to a narrow circle of historians by ending his work with interesting anecdotes about Ristić's private life. A careful reader will notice that Ristić's wife Sofija was "authorized" by her husband to expel their sons Mihailo and Milan from the family home if they did not properly respect her mother or fell into a disappointing or disorderly life (p. 638). The statesman was also a disciplined walker and maintained a healthy exercise habit (even twice a day) into his old age (p. 644).

The depiction of Ristić's personality Radović shares with his readers suggests Ristić as a private individual should be judged in the same way as his political and public persona - as someone who avoided extremes. Radović states that Ristić's chief historiographic works - *Spoljašnji odnošaji Srbije novijega vremena* (Serbian Foreign Relations in more Recent Times) and *Diplomatska istorija Srbije za vreme srpskih ratova za oslobođenje i nezavisnost 1875–1878* (A Diplomatic History of Serbia During the Serbian Wars for Liberation and Independence, 1875–1878) met all the scholarly standards of their time (p. 16). Radović also emphasizes

Ristić's steadfastness at critical moments such as when Serbia stood at a precipice during the Serbian-Turkish wars and the somewhat disappointing outcome of the Congress of Berlin (p. 416). Nevertheless, Radović does not shy away from corroborating Ristić's adversaries' oft repeated accusation that, as regent, he altered records of interrogations of suspected accomplices to Prince Mihailo's assassination (p. 186).

The author's stylistic expression is an ideal balance between scholarly writing and colorful literary prose. This juxtaposition is also evident in some of the titles of chapters and sections such as "Namesnik" (The Regent) alongside "Jabuka razdora" (The Apple of Discord), "Obrana i poslednji dani" (The Defense and the Last Days), "Poniženi i uvređeni" (Humiliated and Insulted). Relatively short sentences of such quality make Radović's monograph easily readable for the general public.

Taking all of this into consideration, the monograph *Jovan Ristić (1829–1899): biografija srpskog državnika* should be viewed as a superb contribution to Serbian historiography and among the most highly recommended works.

Uroš Stanković

doi: 10.19090/i.2024.35.258-259

© Faculty of Philosophy, Novi Sad, 2024
ISTRAŽIVANJA – JOURNAL OF HISTORICAL
RESEARCHES 35, 258-259