

POLITICAL AND SYMBOLIC ASPECTS OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF SERBIAN IDENTITIES IN THE USA, 19th AND 20th CENTURIES: ALLIANCES, CELEBRATIONS AND MONUMENTS

Abstract: *The paper deals with the problem of constructing the identity of several generations of Serb immigrants in the USA during the 19th and 20th centuries. Based on the analysis of the celebrations of Saint Sava Day and Vidovdan in the American context, as well as the attitude of Serbs towards American national celebrations (Independence Day, Decoration Day and Labor Day), the author explains the evolution of Serbian identities in the USA, the construction of the first Serbian monuments in that country and ways of integration of Serbs into American society.*

Keywords: Serbs, Habsburg Monarchy, Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Yugoslavia, United States of America, Americans, emigrants, refugees, identities, integration, assimilation

The settlement of Serbs in the USA took place in waves, from the first half of the 19th century to the modern era. In every generation, perhaps most of all the immigrants, the Serbs showed a great interest in the political, economic and cultural developments in the countries in the south-east of Europe from which they came. The impression was that they were not well integrated into American society or that they did not want to integrate, but that they wanted to return to their homeland as soon as they earned as much money as they felt they needed. On the other hand, the cultural differences – American, mostly republican and Protestant, and Serbian, traditionally monarchist and Orthodox – did not contribute to their rapid integration. In addition, the relationship of constant approaching and moving away under the auspices of the Yugoslav ideology in relation to the significantly more numerous Croats and Slovenes caused the fear of losing one's own identity. Finally, among the Serbs in the USA, in each generation

there were various types of disagreements and bickering, personal, political, social and ideological.

However, our hypothesis is that Serbs developed ways to integrate into American society while maintaining their identities through constant changes and adaptations in an American context that had no particular interest in them. In long-term processes, during the 19th and 20th centuries, we will check this hypothesis on the example of the evolution of celebrations of important dates in Serbian history. Who organizes these celebrations and how? What is the role of the state, and what is the role of private associations? What meaning was given to those celebrations in different circumstances? How is the local, regional and universal articulated in places of remembrance and through various celebrations?

To offer part of the answer to these questions, we consulted the diplomatic materials of the legation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes/Yugoslavia in Washington from the Archives of Yugoslavia in Belgrade, then the documents of the US military intelligence service located in the NARA II archives in College Park, Maryland, and the press of the Serbian emigrants. First, we will consider the basis on which Serbs built their identities, then we will analyze the American view of Serbian and South Slavic identities during the USA's participation in the First World War, after which the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia was created, which, however, did not contribute to an easy transition from Serbian to Yugoslav identities among Serbs, and finally we will address the question of how and in what context the first Serbian monuments were unveiled in America after 1945.

Foundations of Serbian identities in the New World

With the idea of a better life, Serbs went to work from the Habsburg (since 1867 Austro-Hungarian) and Ottoman empires, the Principality (since 1910 Kingdom) of Montenegro and, very rarely, the Principality (since 1882 Kingdom) of Serbia. Most of them were from all parts of the Habsburg Empire inhabited by South Slavs – Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, Vojvodina and Bosnia and Herzegovina (since the Austro-Hungarian occupation in 1878). Searching for work and profit, sometimes as political dissidents of the dynasties whose subjects they were, they settled all over the territory of the USA, especially in the industrial zones of the north, where their number was greatest in Pennsylvania and Illinois. They settled mostly around big cities where there was work. On the West Coast – from the state of Washington to the California cities of San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego and, from Chicago on the Great Lakes in the north, through

Detroit and Pittsburgh, the East Coast and New York, to New Orleans in the south. Some even settled in Alaska.

Almost all the Serbs who came in the first wave of emigration were of rural origin, with experience of farming and living in contact with nature, illiterate, without knowledge of the English language and without property. Although there were those among them who were caught by the “gold fever”, i.e. the hope of getting rich by finding gold and those who continued to cultivate the land as in their native region, most of them did hard physical work in mines, steel mills, various factories, slaughterhouses and forests. Thus, for example, on the wave of the gold fever, Ilija and Jelena Dabović, Serbs from the village of Sasovići near Herceg Novi, parents of Sevastijan, the future first Serbian priest in America, arrived in San Francisco (California) in 1853, and decided to engage in fruit and vegetable processing, while a significantly larger number of Serbs decided to go further inland, towards Nevada and Arizona, in order to work there as miners.

Although, due to limited historical sources, it is not known exactly how the first Serbian settlers defined their Serbian identities and what significance these feelings had for them, we can assume that they were based on a spiritual attachment to the Serbian Orthodox Church and the tradition of epic folk poems that they had taken with them from families, church-school municipalities and schools in the communities they came from, and which they maintained in the new multi-ethnic environment thanks to the already established presence of the Russian Orthodox Church in America.

*Serbian identities and Russian spiritual influence in the USA:
the case of California*

Serbian immigrants to the USA tied their first religious feelings to the Russian church and its clergy.¹ Russian monks have been present in Alaska since the end of the 18th century, while, for example, at the beginning of the 1860s, in California, in San Francisco, Russians, Serbs, Greeks and Syrians organized themselves into an Orthodox community whose spiritual rites took place on the Russian ship “Bogatyr”, anchored in the harbor during the visit of the Russian

¹ The part that follows relies on: Сава Вуковић, *Историја Српске Православне цркве у Америци и Канади, 1891–1941*, (Крагујевац: Каленић, 1994); Миле Суботић, „Српско-руски црквени односи у Сједињеним Америчким Државама у другој половини деветнаестог века”, у: *Српска теологија у двадесетом веку: истраживачки проблеми и резултати*, 18, Београд, 2015, 87–96.

imperial fleet in 1863.² While the Russian fleet was sailing towards San Francisco, Jovan, the future Serbian priest Sevastijan Dabović (1863, San Francisco – 1940, Žiča Monastery), was born as the fourth child of Ilija and Jelena, California fruit growers originally from Sasovići near Herceg Novi. Jovan was baptized by parents with Russian priests on the “Bogatyr” ship, and when the Russian fleet left the USA a few years later, the Orthodox believers were left without a spiritual father until the arrival of a Russian priest from Alaska.

Russian priests noticed Jovan’s interest in religion in his childhood, so they sent him to study in Russia, where from 1885 he studied at the spiritual academy in St. Petersburg and where a few years later he became a monk and was named Sevastijan. Around 1890, when he was less than thirty years old, Father Sevastijan returned to America as a Serbian priest-missionary under the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church in the states of California, Washington and Oregon. While going to the town of Jackson, southeast of Sacramento, California, where a large number of Serbian miners had settled, Dabović decided to build a Serbian church there from the contributions of the parishioners. The Orthodox temple that was built in Jackson and consecrated in 1894 is dedicated to Saint Sava. The reference to the Serbian Middle Ages and Saint Sava was easily recognizable to all the residents of Jackson and California who felt themselves to be Serbs because, over the years, they had heard about this Serbian saint and his importance in their families or Orthodox church-school communities in the places in Southeast Europe they came from. If the construction of the church of St. Sava in Jackson had primarily a spiritual character for the inhabitants of this mining town, the secular and ecclesiastical authorities from Southeastern Europe soon symbolically marked the new church.

In California, there was already a group of Serbs from Montenegro and the Habsburg Monarchy, who saw in Prince Nikola I Petrović, with romantic enthusiasm and reference to the greatness of the Serbian Middle Ages, the pivot of the future gathering of Serbs and Slavs in Southeast Europe. One of them, S. Milivoje from Southern California, published in 1869 a collection of patriotic poems in Latin alphabet dedicated to Prince Nikola, whom he called “a branch of the Slavic tribe and a grandson of the Serbian fruit.”³ More than twenty people from San Francisco with Serbian and Slavic surnames subscribed to this publication,

² Patrick Laurentz, “Visit of Russian Squadrons in 1863”, *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, vol. 61, no. 387 (May 1935), 692–696.

³ S. Milivoje, *Sloboda ili glas vile amerikanske vili slavenskoj u istok*, u Saut Californiji, na Duhove 1869, 58 s.

one of whom was I. Ivanovich, who, before coming to the USA, had participated in the Battle of Grahovo against the Turks (1858) and received a silver medal for bravery from the Montenegrin prince. The news about the construction of the St. Sava Church in Jackson reached Prince Nikola, who sent a significant gift to the church and its parishioners. Probably on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of his reign (1900), Prince Nikola presented the church in Jackson and its believers with a flag (Prince's heraldic standard) with the royal insignia and the Cyrillic initials "N" (Nikola) and the Roman numeral "I" (The First) as a symbol of his political and spiritual convictions of primacy among all Serbs, no matter where they lived and where they came from. The Montenegrin prince relied on the interpretation that prevailed among many Serbs during the 19th century, according to which Montenegro was considered the only unconquered Serbian country since the Middle Ages, and the Petrović-Njegoš dynasty as the legitimate successor of the Serbian medieval Nemanjić dynasty. Entering into rivalry with the other Serbian dynasties of Obrenović and Karađorđević, on the basis of such an interpretation of the past, Prince Nikola considered himself called upon to achieve the unification of all Serbs in southeastern Europe into one state in the future with the help of Russia, and he probably expected that one day the Serbs from the USA would be of financial or, if they returned home, concrete help in this endeavor. The first Serbian ordained priest in America, Father Sevastijan Dabović, was awarded by Prince Nikola with the highest state award – the Order of Prince Danilo, and that award followed shortly after the Order of Saint Anne, which Father Sevastijan had received from the Russian Emperor.

*Between culture and propaganda of Serbs in the USA:
interpretations of the past and their evolution*

American federal institutions did not show particular interest in the identities of American citizens of Serbian origin. Immigration services in the last quarter of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century divided newly arrived migrants from Europe according to "European races", which in the American administrative perception did not necessarily coincide with the countries from which these people came. Official institutions registered: Scandinavians, Slavs, Germanic peoples, Jews, but also Germans, Hungarians, Italians, Greeks, Serbs. The key was how emigrants answered the immigration authorities' question about their "race" and what documents they brought with them when entering the US. Within the "Slavic race", a distinction was sometimes made between "Eastern European Slavs" who came from the Russian, German or Austrian

Empire and “Southern Slavs” who came from the Habsburg Empire, but also from Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria. According to the 1910 state census, of the more than 90 million US inhabitants, about three million were of “Slavic descent” without a clear indication of which ethnic group they belonged to. A few years later, unofficial estimates were about 750,000 South Slavs, mostly Croats and Slovenes, from Austria-Hungary, and between 50,000 and 100,000 Serbs from all over Southeastern Europe. Among them, a significant majority were from various Austro-Hungarian provinces, while Serbs from the Kingdom of Serbia were said to be “almost non-existent” because they were content in their own country with small private estates. At that time, from the American point of view, the most important criteria that allowed migrants to enter the US were health, physical strength and the desire to “take life by its horns”, while “thieves, anarchists, weak-minded and sick people” were sent back by ships that had brought them there.

Most of the Serbs who settled in America organized themselves into associations, brotherhoods and church-school municipalities. Modeled after the homeland and the private association of different immigrant communities, the goal of organizing the Serbs was social and humanitarian assistance to vulnerable members, the construction of Serbian Orthodox churches, schools, cemeteries, singing societies and institutions where cultural heritage and national sentiment were expressed. One of the first major Serbian associations in the USA, the Serbian Orthodox Association *Srbobran*, was founded symbolically on Vidovdan according to the Julian calendar, then in church use among Serbs, on 15 (28) June 1901 in McKeesport near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA federal state where the largest number of Serbs worked in steel mills. The Association was founded mostly by Serbs from Croatia (Lika, Banija, Kordun) in Austria-Hungary, led by Savo Hajdin, who had come to the USA in 1892, at the age of sixteen. Five years after its foundation, in January 1906, the alliance in Pittsburgh that numbered “over 3,000 Serbs” started its paper in the Jekavian dialect of the Serbian language and Cyrillic script, the weekly newspaper *Amerikanski Srbobran* (*American Srbobran*). The editorial of the first issue of the weekly addressed the mostly poor Serbian working population who could read and who were not integrated into American society.

Their integration was encouraged by referring to the universal Christian references of the New Testament, the industriousness and wealth of the Americans, and the strengthening of the sense of community among the Serbs, wherever they came from. In the editorial of the first issue of the weekly, imbued with Christian ideas of brotherhood, the Americans were presented as a model because they made their country rich, unlike “our country” (meaning Austria-Hungary)

which “remained poor.”⁴ Given that at the beginning of the 20th century, integration in working-class environments was difficult due to alcoholism, poor working conditions and high mortality, the author of the editorial underlined that the reason why the Americans had won the “championship among all nations in the world” lied in the fact that they “always worked, studied and read”, and that he expected Serbs to do the same. In addition to a kind of work education, the goal of starting the newspaper was to teach readers about “Serbian nationality and the holy Orthodox faith”, while the example of the “brothers Czechs” was cited as a model of successful organizing in the USA in order to preserve their national identity (“principle of each to his/her own”).⁵

The fate of Dušan Savov Petrović is an example of a “Serb who works in a Serbian manner”, which meant that he was dedicated to the common interest of the Serbian association, that he earned money by working in a factory and that he sent money to his parents in his hometown. He was born in 1881 in Trebinje to father Sava and mother Saveta, and came to America at the age of twenty-two (1903), with the desire to spend some time among his own brothers and to “be of use to them with his knowledge.”⁶ As a child, Dušan was sent to Montenegro, where he finished elementary school in Nikšić and then high school in Cetinje, after which he went to live with his brothers in America. Having finished high school, he was considered educated, “smart and honest” among the Serbs in Pittsburgh, and as such he was elected secretary of the “Srbobran” Association. However, he soon fell seriously ill and died at the age of twenty-four (1905). He was buried at the city cemetery in McKeesport, in the presence of brothers, relatives and members of “Srbobran”. The author of Dušan Petrović’s obituary in *Amerikanski Srbobran* attributed to the deceased, as well as “many Serbs” in the USA, a thought and a sigh in the last hour about “the mountains of Herzegovina and Montenegro so dear to all of us” and “the village cemetery in his homeland”, while the sea symbolized the only physical link between the deceased’s grave and his native Herzegovina.⁷

In addition to the graves, sea, mountains and native village, the determinants of the identity of Serbs in the USA were also churches and their dedications, reading rooms and celebrations of church holidays, as well as engagements and weddings of “young and enthusiastic Serbian men and women.” For example, the Orthodox Church in Pittsburgh was dedicated to “St. George”, a Roman soldier

⁴ „Наша прва ријеч”, *Американски Србобран*, Питсбург, 5/18. јануар 1906, 1.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Велимир М. Хајдин, „Душан Петковић”, *Американски Србобран*, Питсбург, 5/18. јануар 1906, 1–2.

⁷ Ibid.

who was martyred for his Christian faith at the beginning of the 4th century; in nearby McKeesport – St. Sava; a St. Sava sermon was held in the Serbian reading room in Pittsburgh, after which a banquet was organized; in the same reading room one could also buy the illustrated calendar “Srbobran”, an important identity reading of the Serbian population from Croatia and Slavonia, which was published in Zagreb from 1892 to 1914 and which was recommended to “all Serbs” as a “good folk booklet”.⁸

St. Sava Day, January 27 – “Serbian Saint Day”

In addition to American history, which symbolized freedom and progress, *Amerikanski Srbobran* from Pittsburgh, as well as other Serbian newspapers in the USA, referred to the Serbian Middle Ages and 19th-century romanticism in its goal of teaching about “Serbian nationality and the holy Orthodox faith.” Many Serbs in the USA were familiar with those references because they had heard about them in their childhood in the majority Serbian areas where they came from. Therefore, it is not surprising that on the occasion of the day of Saint Sava (Savindan), on 27 January 1906, an article in the Pittsburgh weekly about the meaning of the celebration was written by Isaije Mitrović, a Serbian folk teacher from Bihać.⁹ Mitrović compared the situation among the medieval Serbs before the arrival of Saint Sava with the situation among the Serbs in his time and established simple parallels: dispersion in various parts of the world, disunity, external pressures and loss of awareness of origin. Among the most significant merits of Saint Sava from the end of the 12th and the beginning of the 13th century, he included the reconciliation of brothers, opposition to the “Catholicization of Serbia” and the building of monasteries and schools. He then called on the Serbs of his time to follow the deeds of Saint Sava by helping each other and preserving the memory of their past regardless of where they had lived. He asked his readers in the USA to celebrate the St. Sava Day with the song “Let Us Sing With Love to Saint Sava”, which was familiar to them from their homeland. A Serbian folk teacher from Bihać expressed his fears about the drowning of Serbs in the foreign lands in the spirit of 19th-century romanticism by quoting a line from the 1862 poem “Fall, Brothers” by Đura Jakšić, without asking the question to what extent it actually affected the integration of Serbs into American society: “The sky will cry long and bitterly / But, the Serbs will be no more”.

⁸ *Американски Србобран*, Питсбург, 5/18. јануар 1906, 2.

⁹ Исаије Митровић, „Свети Сава”, *Американски Србобран*, Питсбург, 12/25. јануар 1906, 1.

During the period from 1907 to 1909, when the editor of *Amerikanski Srbobran* was Čedomir Pavić, January 27 was called Serbian “national saint day” in the editorial, and Saint Sava became a symbol of resistance to every foreign invader throughout Serbian history and an inspiration for the future.¹⁰ Pavić was born in 1882 in Šavnik, Montenegro, in a wealthy merchant family. He studied high school in Belgrade, where he began studying literature at the Faculty of Philosophy. However, since he was threatened with arrest in Montenegro for speaking out against Prince Nikola, he fled to the USA in 1904, where he first lived in New York, and then in Pittsburgh, as an associate, then editor of the newspaper of the Serbian Society – *Srbobran*.

His student patriotism set the tone for the interpretation of the significance of the celebration of St. Sava Day for Serbs in America. The celebration of St. Sava Day in 1909 had a special significance because it was forbidden in Serbian schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the Austro-Hungarian annexation (1908). Since that day was celebrated in Serbia and Montenegro, the two Serbian states were placed on the same level as the USA in terms of the freedom to express national sentiments. Although St. Sava was seen as a “Serbian educator and teacher” whose glorious heritage was claimed by the Karađorđević and Petrović dynasties, the interpretation of the Turkish burning of the relics of St. Sava in Vračar in 1594 was more significant. For the author of the editorial, burning the relics of St. Sava caused the opposite effect of what the Turks wanted to achieve: the “whisper” of the desire to throw off the shackles of centuries of Turkish slavery did not die down among the Serbs, but, on the contrary, since then it was transformed into a battle cry: “On your feet, Serbs, Saint Sava is calling!” But this anger and desire for revenge, for the author of the text, was no longer directed at Turkey, which was in decline, but at Austria, which was seen as a new threat and called “the other Turk”. Thus, the song “Let Us Sing” took on a new meaning: Saint Sava was supposed to “bless the weapons of the soldiers of Serbia and Montenegro” and the war flag wherever it was unfurled “so that the Serb may be freed”. The image of St. Sava changed significantly in the USA after 1908 under the influence of events in the Balkans and signified spiritual preparation for the invitation to the Serbs to return to their homeland when the “hour struck” for reckoning with centuries-old empires.

Čedomir Pavić moved to San Francisco in 1909, where he edited the newspaper *Srpski glasnik*. He also enrolled at Berkeley, but in 1912, after the outbreak of the First Balkan War, he went to Montenegro with a group of 4,500 Serbian and Montenegrin volunteers to fight against the Turks. A testimony steeped

¹⁰ „Народна Слава”, *Американски Србобран*, Питсбург, 15/28. јануар 1909/January 28, 1909, 1.

in the classical culture inherited from the 19th century (referring to Antiquity, the Serbian Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the “American miracle”) about his journey by train through the USA from San Francisco to New York carrying the Serbian flag, by ship from New York to Bar, and about his participation in the war, he left it in the book *From the Pacific to the Mud of Skadar*, published in San Francisco in 1913.¹¹

At that time, Vidovdan, a church holiday that had been celebrated in Serbia since the end of the 19th century as a day of remembrance of all Serbian heroes who had died from the “Battle of Kosovo until our days”, got a new interpretation. Since 1911, the church holiday fell into the background, giving way to the secular and concrete. In order to “avenge Kosovo”, the Central Committee of the Serbian National Defense (SNO) in Belgrade declared Vidovdan “a day of knight parade and a preparation for a better future”¹². For this purpose, the “Vidovdanski darak” (*Vidovdan gift*) was established, for which the “brothers” from the USA contributed about one percent of the total amount collected.

*Independence Day, 4th of July – from the “glory of American citizens”
to the holiday of citizens’ duty to abolish the government
that does not take into account their interests*

The differences between Serbian culture, traditionally Orthodox and monarchist, and American, mostly Protestant and republican, were overcome by referencing the universal values of freedom and progress. *Amerikanski Srbobran* from Pittsburgh called the bicentenary of the birth of American statesman and scientist Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) on 17 January 1906 “the glory of American citizens” to which the Serbs in the USA joined with “expressions of respect and gratitude.”¹³ References to the determinants of the glory and values of American progress and freedom were easily understood by Serbs who felt that their rights were denied in Austria-Hungary, from which most of them came. Benjamin Franklin was depicted as a scientist and inventor who had invented the lightning rod, which made every house safer, as “one of the first sons of America” who had won freedom for his people and as a journalist, publisher and “teacher of his people”. A brief description of B. Franklin’s life and American history was

¹¹ Чедомир Павић (Кринка Видаковић-Петров et alli., прир.), *С Пацифика на Скадарско блато*, (Подгорица, Матица српска, 2016), 141.

¹² Милан Васић, „Браћо!”, *Американски Србобран*, Питсбург, 20. јун/4 јул/July, 4, 1912, 2.

¹³ „Вијести из Америке. Бенјамин Франклин”, *Американски Србобран*, Питсбург, 12/25. Јануар 1906, 3.

intended to introduce readers to the significance of the American national holiday of the 4th of July, which was celebrated every year without many settlers even knowing what they were celebrating. The explanation was simple and clear to everyone: since the future USA had been “groaning under English rule” which “the people were fed up with”, on 4 July 1776, Franklin proclaimed the freedom and independence of thirteen American states from the city hall in Philadelphia. Without mentioning the war for American independence (1775–1783), the victory over the British and the adoption of the declaration on the day that was later celebrated as Independence Day, the author of the text called 4th of July “the day of freedom”, which was familiar to the majority of Serbs.

In fact, the universal symbolism of the American Independence Day was used by the Serbs from Chicago to express a public protest against the Austro-Hungarian administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1906, trying to draw the attention of other Slavs in America, the American public and the government. Representatives of Serbs from Chicago, “other Southern Slavs”, “Czech brothers” and one of their representatives in the American Congress gathered on the 4th of July 1906 in Chicago to demand “the most fundamental rights” on behalf of “30,000 Balkan Slavs” from that city, national rights and self-governance “of their unjustly trampled country.”¹⁴

After the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908 and the arrival of Oskar Potiorek to the post of governor of that province (1911), the dissatisfaction of the Serbs with the Austro-Hungarian administration grew. As in the case of St. Sava Day, the Serbian interpretation of the 4th of July holiday evolved. In the text titled in English, but written in Cyrillic alphabet “Форт Оф Ђулај”, the author of the editorial of *Amerikanski Srbobran* interprets that the Declaration of Independence from 1776 implies the duty of citizens to abolish a government that would not work in their interest and to replace it with another, which would ensure “general happiness and security.”¹⁵ The way the title is written indicates that it was intended for Serbs in the USA who did not know English, but who had heard the date of the national holiday being pronounced in their surroundings.

It was explained that Americans did not dedicate only twenty-four hours to this holiday, but that they were continuously, from generation to generation, dedicated to preserving the legacy of the 4th of July that inspired them in the future, which should be a model for Serbs as well: “The history of the United States

¹⁴ „Велики збор у Чикагу за Босну и Херцеговину”, *Американски Србобран*, Питсбург, 28. јун/12. јул 1906, 2. In this edition, the date is written first in English, but in the Serbian form.

¹⁵ „Форт оф Ђулај”, *Американски Србобран*, Питсбург, 4 јула/July, 4, 1912, 1.

constantly raises the ambition of new generations to create new history.” Since the beginning of the century, the Serbian interpretation of the 4th of July has evolved from a celebration of the idea of freedom modeled on family glory to an implicit suggestion that this freedom, along with independence, was to be won by returning to the country and fighting against the Austro-Hungarian regime.

The First World War, Serbian identities and American military intelligence, 1917–1918

After the US entered the war against Germany in April 1917 and Austria-Hungary in December of the same year, the federal government began to pay special attention to citizens of then-hostile countries who resided in America, as well as to American citizens originally from those countries. Americans have since then made a clear distinction between Slavs or South Slavs from Austria-Hungary, who they feared were serving the enemy as “spies” and were “disloyal” to the American government, and Serbs, regardless of where they came from, who were seen as “respecters of the American constitution”, which meant that they followed the policy of alliance with the Entente and Serbia, then occupied, but with a government and army in exile.

The alleged Austrian conspiracy against the American government in December 1917 in California speaks of American views of Slavs and Serbs in war-time conditions. US military intelligence officers characterized the possible exposure of the “Austrian plot” as “one of the most significant discoveries ever addressed by a counterintelligence organization,” and observations of the suspects’ use of language and symbolism played a significant role in the investigation. In mid-December 1917, at the Camp Kearny military base near San Diego, soldier Stiv Glačić Bokan, born in Dalmatia, without American citizenship, a worker before joining the army, reported to his superiors the secret activity of the “Austrians” in San Diego against the US government.¹⁶ Bokan was subjected to a detailed interrogation by the military intelligence.¹⁷ He said that he had met one soldier

¹⁶ National Archives and Records Administration II (NARA II), College Park (MD): Record Group: War Department General Staff (RG 165), Series: Security Classified Correspondence and Reports, 1917-1941, Entry: Military Intelligence Division Coverage (A1 65), Box no. 3303 (10453-5 to 10456-4), Doc. no. 10454-31/3, Dave Gershon to War Department, San Diego, 12.12.1917, report.

¹⁷ Ibid., 10454-15 to 10454-31, Interrogation of Steve Glacich Bokan, Private, CO. “F”, 159th Infantry, Ref. Austrian activities, by Dave Gerchon, Special agent, Department of Justice at Camp Kearny, Calif., December 12, 1917.

and one civilian with the surnames Kalibović and Stepić who spoke “Austrian” language that he understood. They allegedly took him to an apartment in the city center during his vacation, under the guise of socializing, where he heard them say that they would “cut Wilson’s throat” and “sink American ships” if they were sent to the European battlefield. In addition, Bokan also described a secret “Austrian” rite in which several people participated, including Kalibović and Stepić. The rite consisted of the alleged conspirators taking an oath under images of the German and Austro-Hungarian emperors with three fingers raised and uttering words of loyalty to them until death.

The mentioned conspirators, a soldier and a civilian, were in fact a thirty-one-year-old former guard on ships from San Francisco, Džerom Antoni Kalibović, born in Split, Dalmatia, who had come to the USA in 1905, and a thirty-two-year-old waiter, Sem Stepić, born in Boka Kotorska, also in Dalmatia, who had come to the USA at the age of sixteen (1901) to “avoid military service in Austria” and who defined himself as “loyal to America, a Serb by nationality and a subject of Austria.” During interrogation, both claimed to be “Serbian patriots” and denied Bokan’s statement. Kalibović claimed that he was with Bokan at the Slavic Club in San Diego, that there were no pictures of the two emperors, that there were Serbian flags and that he thought “the others present were Serbs because they spoke strongly in favor of Serbia.”¹⁸ Stepić’s testimony was unequivocal: he was in the Slavic club with “Serbian boys,”¹⁹ they spoke Serbian, and on the disputed day “some Slavs, not Serbs”, who he did not know well, came.²⁰ To underline his loyalty to the USA, Stepić said that his uncle Arso had died in 1917 as a volunteer in the British army, that his brother Milan had joined the Serbian army on the Salonika front and that he had been a member of the Serbian National Defense (SNO) in San Diego and of the Serbian Society from San Francisco since arriving in the country in 1901.

After inspecting Stepić’s SNO membership card, which was assessed as “permitted and regular”, checking the Slavic Club in San Diego, following the suspects and interviewing people who knew them, US military intelligence concluded that there was no basis for further investigation. Kalibović was assessed as “reliable even though he was born Austrian”, and Stepić as “a radical Serb who is

¹⁸ Ibid., 10454-31/6, Dave Gershon to War Department, San Diego, 27.12.1917; Ibid., 10454-31/9, Interrogation of private Kalibovich, 21.12.1917, 1–5.

¹⁹ Peter Vuich, Bob Kostich, Vlaovich.

²⁰ NARA II, MD, RG165, A1 65, Box 3303, 10454-31/9, Interrogation of private Kalibovich, 21.12.1917, Sam Stepich, 6–11.

against Austria and Germany.”²¹ We can assume that Bokan was, in fact, describing the oath of a group of people, perhaps sympathizers of the secret Black Hand association in connection with the SNO in San Diego, which he attributed to a secret “Austrian association” in order to provoke action by the American authorities, and that Kalibović and Stepić, referring to Serbian identity, proved that they did not belong to any conspiratorial association. At the time of the Balkan wars and immediately after their end, the oath of unquestioning loyalty to the Black Hand among the Serbs from Austria-Hungary, took place under the pictures of King Peter and the regent Aleksandar, with Serbian flags and the raising of three fingers, and the vague descriptions of that ceremony that they heard about from countrymen in the USA probably also inspired the young Serbs from California. At the end of the investigation, US military investigators concluded that Bokan was a disillusioned applicant for US citizenship who had been denied, and that for his own personal interests he wanted to attract attention and connect with military intelligence so that its support might help him in the future.²²

The mention of the restitution of Serbia and Montenegro and Serbia’s gaining access to the sea to the sea in the 14th points of Woodrow Wilson from January 1918 caused the approval of the Serbs in the USA. However, the mention in the same document of autonomy for the peoples of Austria-Hungary was not unanimously accepted among the South Slavs. While the Serbs who publicly expressed their Serbian identity were in the American eyes mostly identified with the wartime loyalty of Serbia: Slavs, Yugoslavs, Slovenes, Croats and some Serbs from Austria-Hungary, in the US they were seen as distinctly divided into different mutually opposing groups. The American government called them Austrians after the country they came from or were originally from.

From the point of view of the American authorities, the mutual division and opposition of the Austrians in the USA in wartime conditions represented “a beautiful source of information as each faction reports against the other.”²³ The incident that broke out in December 1917 in the Yugoslav Progressive Club from San Pedro, California was reported by one of the parties to the conflict, and the whole case ended in a military court. The conflict arose when a group of Austrians, club members with South Slavic surnames, who had become American citizens, planned to express their loyalty to the USA. They were insulted by American

²¹ Ibid., 10454-31/11, Albin Johnson to War Department, Camp Kearny, Calif., January 19, 1918, Confidential.

²² Ibid., 10454-31/17, Robin D. Watkins to War Department, San Francisco, Calif., February 20, 1918.

²³ Ibid., 10454-30/3, C. A. Parker to War Department, Los Angeles, Calif., January 2, 1918, 3.

soldier Joseph Joe Rajavich, who spoke Croatian and English and called himself Austrian, as “traitors of Austria and the Austrian flag” and physically threatened them.²⁴ The investigation was conducted under the title “alleged German activities-traitor” and ended with the verdict that Rajavich was guilty of verbal and public threats against the interests of the USA and his referral to serve his sentence in Alcatraz prison in California.²⁵

The decision of the Allies in the summer of 1918 that Austria-Hungary should be dissolved deepened the disagreements among the South Slavs in the USA. The American military intelligence service had in its ranks a few Yugoslav and Serb informants who reported on the presumed hostile activity of the other side. At the beginning of July 1918, a “Yugoslav” informant in Gary, Indiana, reported that Mihajlo Pupin, a professor at Columbia University, was disloyal to the USA, and the information was written down for the service’s bulletin by a certain Olga Trbović.²⁶ Without open suspicion that he was working for the enemy, but with the remark that he was undermining American interests, Pupin was said to be supporting divisions among Serbs and “creating trouble” within the Serbian Benevolent Society of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the New York-based Serbian National Defense League, and the official Serbian War Mission in the USA. In the context of support for the recruitment of Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian volunteers in America for the Serbian army on the Salonika front and the fear of recruiting enemy “spies” in its ranks, the US Department of Defense immediately conducted an investigation into Pupin’s activities. The Military Department of Morale, a group for soldiers who spoke foreign languages of the military intelligence service, received information about Pupin that before obtaining American citizenship he had been an “Austrian subject”, that in the ongoing war he had “served as a volunteer in the Serbian army”, that he was strongly hostile towards the Central Powers and that he was one of the most influential Serbs in the USA.²⁷

Although Pupin’s service as consul general of the Kingdom of Serbia in New York from 1911 was not mentioned in the report, his voluntary service in the Serbian army was constructed to underline his adherence to American policy since

²⁴ Ibid., 2.

²⁵ Ibid., 10454-30/5, Headquarters 40th Division Camp Kearny, Cal., General Court-Martial Orders No. 12, signed: John W. Gulick, February 19, 1918, 2.

²⁶ Ibid., Box 3526, 10564-43/137, F.S.S. Bulletin (Mrs. Olga Trbovich), Captain Hunt, s.l., July 3, 1918, 1.

²⁷ Ibid., Box 3532, 10565-524/1, G. B. Perkins, Chief, Military Morale Section, Foreign-Speaking Soldier Sub-Section, Military Intelligence Branch, War Department to Intelligence Officer, Camp Wadsworth, S. Carolina, Washington, D.C., July 24, 1918.

the US entry into the war in 1917 on the side of the Entente. From the perspective of American interests, Pupin was also assessed as being “of exceptional value” in quelling strikes and “speeding up work” in industrial centers where significant groups of Serbs worked, over whom he had influence, and his work on submarine experiments for the US Department of the Navy was especially emphasized. The military intelligence concluded that Pupin was “of inestimable importance” to its activities among the “South-Slavs” in the US who were defined, probably in the order of their numbers, as “Croats, Serbs and Slovenes.”²⁸ Pupin was recommended as a member of the Headquarters Company of the intelligence service that “worked among the Serbs” in the USA, to which, in a report repeated sometime later, the designation “and other South Slavs” who were considered susceptible to hostile influences was added.²⁹ At that time, in the Slavic Legion composed of future soldiers who did not speak English and were trained by the US Army at Camp Wadsworth in South Carolina to control them, there were “Czechoslovak, Yugoslav and Ruthenian” groups, while the Serbs were not mentioned.³⁰

The American government addressed Pupin as the consul general of Serbia in New York regarding the outbreak of intelligence complaints related to people coming to the USA from occupied Montenegro. Here we cite the example of the poet and politician Mićun M. Pavićević (1879–1947), the head of the Montenegrin Office for National Unification (1916–1918), who was sent by the Serbian government to Canada and the USA to carry out national propaganda and who was reported for espionage activities in New York as a German agent.³¹ The document found by the American intelligence in Pavićević’s room during the search proved “that he is a Serb.” His identity was confirmed by Pupin in a letter in which he called him an “honest and hearty patriot”, which was sufficient to stop the investigation against Pavićević.

Some Croats in the USA, who were suspected of being Austro-Hungarian informers, mentioned Pupin as a protector. When in September 1918 he was suspected of activities in support of Austria-Hungary, Pupin’s protection was sought by Frank Zotti, the publisher of *National Gazette*, a Croatian daily from New

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., Box 3532, 10565-524/2, G. B. Perkins, Chief, Military Morale Section, Foreign-Speaking Soldier Sub-Section, Military Intelligence Branch, War Department to Intelligence Officer, Camp Wadsworth, S. Carolina, Washington, D.C., August 6, 1918.

³⁰ Ibid., 10565-524/6, M. Churchill, Brigadier General, General Staff to Intelligence Officer, Camp Wadsworth, S. Carolina, s.l., October 31, 1918.

³¹ Ibid., Box. 444 (PF 29736-29792), PF 29754, Department Intelligence Officer to Director of Military Intelligence, NYC, September 9, 1918.

York. Through his employee, a personal friend of Pupin, George Sekulich, whom American investigators saw as a “Montenegrin, former publisher of Serbian newspapers”, Zotti requested a meeting with the Serbian consul from whom he expected protection from the American authorities.³²

When complaints came that the Croatian National Society, one of the largest Croatian associations in the US with about 43,000 members, was pursuing a hostile policy, the US intelligence hired a prominent Serbian publisher from Chicago, John R. Pallandich, and on his recommendation, two Serbs from South Chicago, originally from Austria-Hungary, Nicholas S. Grahovac and Eli Pochucha, to verify the truth of the allegations. The Serbs reported in detail to the American intelligence about the assembly they had attended, which the Croatian association had held on 15 September 1918, in Chicago.³³ Since the loyalist faction in the Croatian association prevailed over the pro-Austrian and socialist faction, further investigation was suspended and the case closed. Loyalty in this case is defined in the manner done by Ante Trumbić, the president of the Yugoslav Committee from London, who had sent a greeting letter to the gathering and asked the members to be loyal to the USA against their “oppressors, the Austrians and the Germans.” Serbs and Serbia were not even mentioned at the Croatian meeting, but only Croatia, where “slavery, tyranny and oppression reign via Austria-Hungary” and which can only be helped by the “free USA”. In accordance with that position, financial support was voted exclusively for the Yugoslav Committee in London and the American, Yugoslav, Czechoslovak, Polish and Russian Red Cross.³⁴

In the political and personal conflict that broke out between M. Pupin and the South Slavic National Council, a body that since March 1915 had brought together individual Slovenian, Croatian and Serbian organizations from the USA made up of former Austro-Hungarian subjects, American military intelligence hired Viktor J. Kubelka, born in Laibach (Ljubljana), who knew the Slovenian language well, as an informant.³⁵ In 1904, Kubelka published an English-Slovenian pocket dictionary for his “countrymen” in the USA, which had two editions.³⁶ For

³² Ibid., Box. 3375 (10517-77 to 10516-229), 10517-96/86230x, V.J. Valjavec to War Department, New York, October 3, 1918.

³³ Ibid., Box. 252 (213-25 to 214-7), 214-1/304-50x, Castel M. Brown to War Department, Chicago, IL, October 10, 1918, 5.

³⁴ Ibid., 4.

³⁵ Ibid., Box. 2251 (10058-95 to 10058-199), 10058-185/8, V. J. Kubelka to Lieut. A. Hlavac Jr, s.l., September 25, 1918, 6.

³⁶ Victor J. Kubelka, *Slovenian-English Pocket Dictionary/Slovensko-angleški žepni slovar*, (New York, 1904, 1912²).

Kubelka, the terms Yugoslavs and South Slavs were synonymous and referred to Slovenes, Croats, Serbs and Bulgarians. The South Slavic movement included Slovenes, Croats and Serbs whom it defined, according to the then prevailing interpretation of the Serbian government and the Yugoslav Committee, as three branches of the same nation that was “oppressed and separated” by Austria-Hungary. Kubelka reported on Pupin’s departure from the South Slavic National Council in 1917, on the Serbian Federation “Sloga” from New York, headed by Pupin, and on the newspaper *Srbobran* (Serbian Defense) of that federation, by taking evaluations of Pupin’s political opponents. Pupin and his federation were judged to be “not for Yugoslavia, but supporting the idea of an enlarged Serbia under the rule of Karađorđević”, but the American authorities were suggested to work on the unification of these two opposing groups in order to “line up all Yugoslavs in the USA in one group.”³⁷

The State Department, under the administration of Robert Lansing, Secretary of State (1915–1920), who was a great supporter of South Slavic unification, became interested in the conflict between South Slavs in the USA.³⁸ The US government has dropped all charges against Pupin, who was characterized as “completely loyal” and working for US interests, and asked him for his opinion on the South Slavic Council. However, although Pupin demanded that it should be dissolved, while “the majority of Serbs in the USA” and the Serbian government did not support it, after the signing of the armistice on 11 November 1918 and the proclamation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes on 1 December 1918 in Belgrade, the American military intelligence said it had found no activity at the council against US national interests that would have prompted it to take any action against that body.³⁹

The difficulties of the transition from Serbian to Yugoslav identity in the USA: examples of the Vidovdan celebration, 1918–1939

Due to the activities of the SNO in the USA during the First World War, Vidovdan (St. Vitus Day) became a more significant date than St. Sava Day among the Serbs, in a symbolic and political sense. With strong propaganda based

³⁷ NARA II, MD, RG165, A1 65, Box. 2251 (10058-95 to 10058-199), 10058-185/8, V. J. Kubelka to Lieut. A. Hlavac Jr, s.l., September 25, 1918, 5–6.

³⁸ Ibid., 10058-185/9, Director of Military Intelligence (M. Churchill) to Captain Hugh Moore, s. l., November 6, 1918.

³⁹ Ibid., 10058-185/11v, Department Intelligence Officer (C.P. Barnett) to Director of Military Intelligence, New York, December 30, 1918.

on the Serbian tradition of the Battle of Kosovo and the development of the cult of Miloš Obilić, the SNO, since 1917, encouraged Vidovdan celebrations among Serbs throughout the USA, the collection of Vidovdan donations and the recruitment of volunteers who were called Vidovdan fighters for the Serbian army on the Salonika front.⁴⁰

After the end of the war and the proclamation of the Kingdom of SHS, Vidovdan became one of the most significant celebrations among Serbs in the USA, which was associated with the victory in the war and the unification of the Serbs into one state. The intention of the Serbs was to make Vidovdan acceptable to both Croats and Slovenians under the auspices of the South Slavic state and under the slogan that they would turn it into a “new rich and powerful America”. In addition, there was a prevailing opinion among Serbs that Slavs were “poorly understood” in the USA, which in 1919 prompted Paja Radosavljević (1879, Obrež, Srem – 1958, St. Petersburg, Florida), professor of psychology and pedagogy at New York University, to publish two volumes of a book on the collective psychology of the Slavic “race”, in English, in which he equated Serbs with Croats and called them Serbo-Croats, and considered Slavs naturally destined for democracy.⁴¹

The first “Free Vidovdan”, on 28 June 1919, coincided with the 530th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo,⁴² the so-called “decennial anniversary” that increased the significance of the holiday. Throughout the USA, in June 1919, in places where there were Serbs, Vidovdan celebrations were held in public spaces, on a day when it was most convenient for the organizers and the local administration. In addition to references to the Serbian Middle Ages and the Battle of Kosovo, epic folk poetry and romanticism of the 19th century, the most significant reference became the First World War (the defense of Serbia in 1914, “Golgotha” through Albania in 1915/16, the importance of Serbian and Yugoslav volunteers from the USA, 1917/ 18), which was presented in the continuity of suffering and struggle for freedom throughout Serbian history. If that message was easily comprehensible to the Serbs from Austria-Hungary, it was more difficult to make it comprehensible and acceptable to the much larger number of Croats and Slovenes in the USA.

⁴⁰ „Слава Видовдану”, *Американски Србобран/The American Srbobran*, Питсбург, 27 јун 1917/June 27, 1917, 1–3. Since the second decade of the 20th century, the newspaper has had bilingual English-Serbian title and date.

⁴¹ Paul R. Radosavljevic, *Who are the Slavs? A contribution to Race Psychology*, I-II, (Boston, Richard Badger, 1919).

⁴² „Тебе Бога хвалим! Видовдан после 530 година“, *Американски Србобран/The American Srbobran*, Питсбург, 27 јун 1919, 1.

*The Americanization of Vidovdan on a private basis:
the 1919 Vidovdan celebration in Chicago*

The Serbian colony in Chicago, headed by the SNO, organized the Vidovdan celebration on 15 June 1919⁴³ according to the Gregorian calendar, as traditionally that day had been celebrated according to the Julian calendar used by the church. It was the first Vidovdan celebration after the end of the First World War, so it was called the “Victory Day” celebration, and the Serbian House in Chicago was decorated with the flags of all allies. The celebration began at nine o’clock in the morning, with representatives of the SNO and various Serbian associations welcoming the guests to the Serbian House. Among the guests was Ante Biankini (1860, Stari grad on Hvar – 1934, Chicago), a Croatian doctor educated in Vienna, who had come to Chicago in 1898, and during the war had been the president of the Yugoslav Committee in the USA and worked on sending South Slavic volunteers to Salonika front.

However, special attention was attracted by Anđelko Mandušić (1887–1959), a Serb born in Prizren, who had fought as a corporal in the American army during the war on the Western Front in Europe, and the car he came in. Having enlisted as a volunteer in the US Army as Jake Alex, he became a sergeant in the war and a hero “celebrated by all of Chicago”, decorated with Allies’ decorations. He received the highest American military decoration – the Medal of Honor, and was one of the few Serbs who were declared heroes of the Great War by the USA. Mandušić was in the center of the car, surrounded by several “lovely Serbian women” in national costumes. When the car arrived with the American colonel under whose command Mandušić had been in the war, and Ivan Palandić, a distinguished American of Serbian origin from a family of Chicago publishers, the American national anthem was played.

From the Serbian House, accompanied by the Serbian Singing Society “Branko Radičević”, the procession left for the park near the Serbian church for the service, carrying with it *koljivo* (liturgical dish) for the souls of “our fallen heroes” in the war. Musicians followed behind the parade marshal, who stood at the head of the procession and was responsible for its successful movement, and behind the musicians the “Jugovići” crusader flag, the American flag, the flag of Serbian volunteers, and behind them the banners of all Serbian associations. The

⁴³ Чика, „Са Видовданске прославе у Чикагу“, *Американски Србобран/The American Srbobran*, Питсбург, 3. јули 1919, 2.

crusader flag was a flag with the symbol of the cross that had been used since the Middle Ages in many Christian countries. In the Serbian tradition, the crusader flag was mentioned in the epic poems of the Kosovo and post-Kosovo cycle. A car with Mandušić was following the flags, and on the side of the car were uniformed Serbs who had been in the American army in France. Behind the car were members of "Jugovići" associations in traditional costumes, in front – of the old Jug Bogdan, and on the side – of the nine Jugovići. They were followed by the SNO administration, representatives of Serbian cultural and patriotic societies and about twenty cars.

The procession moved along with the march "Gladly Does the Serb Become a Soldier", which referred to the time of Serbian romanticism of the 19th century. The march was composed at the beginning of 1840 in Pančevo among Serbian border guards in the Habsburg Monarchy. During the 19th century, it became one of the most famous songs of Serbs from Vojvodina and was known to most of the present settlers. In the park near the church, Archimandrite Mardarije Uskoković (1889, Podgorica – 1935, Ann Arbor, Michigan) held a memorial service for fallen fighters and heroes and consecrated the *koljivo*.

Then came speeches in which Palandić was the only one to speak in English. He put the heroism of Mandušić in the American army on the same level with the "Serbian heroism" shown during the war, about which "the whole world knows." By this he wanted to say that the Serbs from the USA had also contributed to the American victory in the war. The colonel of the American army understood the message of his predecessor and emphasized that he "appreciates the Serbs a lot" because he personally saw Mandušić himself capturing 58 Germans during the war. However, Mandušić, who did not speak English, in his speech gave recognition to the soldier-peasant of the regular Serbian army as much as to the American army. Since he was a native of Prizren, for him the traditional enemies of the Serbs were the Bulgarians, so he publicly expressed his regret that he had not fought against the Bulgarians like his countrymen in the ranks of the victorious Serbian army.

The success of the Vidovdan celebration in Chicago in 1919 was ensured to a large extent by American private capital. Before enlisting as a volunteer in the US Army, Mandušić worked at the meat production and packaging company "Morris and Comp. from Chicago. Out of respect for his services during the war, that company had given the car in which he was in and decorated it with flowers. In addition, the SNO board received from the company "Morris and comp." Mandušić's images with the history of his heroism written bilingually, in English and Serbian, which were sold for ten cents each. The company earmarked the entire income from the sold paintings for Serbian orphans who were to be placed

in the Serbian Orphanage in the USA, for the construction of which the organizers collected contributions at the end of the celebration.

*Serbs at the state celebration of American Independence Day on July 4, 1919
in Washington: Whose Dalmatian hat is it?*

A few days after Vidovdan, at the central celebration of the American Independence Day on 4th of July 1919 in Washington, the first after the end of the war, Serbs from the USA also participated.

The celebration was organized by the American government in the capital, on the 143rd anniversary of the proclamation of the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia, the universal significance of which was particularly emphasized at the celebration. Representatives of the victorious states in the war participated in the event, celebrating their freedom and independence won in 1918. That is why that day was also called Liberation Day. The US government organized a parade that began on the evening of July 4 and lasted more than two hours. It was designed to be easily understood by American participants and observers: during the parade, various cars were paraded with adult men in the national costumes of the countries they came from and children as a symbol of youth.

The participation of Serbs was organized by the Legation of the Kingdom of SHS, which was still officially called the Legation of the Kingdom of Serbia, in Washington, headed by Minister Plenipotentiary Slavko Grujić (1918–1922), while Branko Lazarević – a very active propagator of South Slavic unification – was the Secretary.⁴⁴ The legation was assisted by the Serbian National Defense from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and its secretary V. Kračun.⁴⁵ From the point of view of Serbian diplomacy, the engagement of the Kračun for this celebration had a symbolic significance: Serbs lived in the city where the most important document of American history had been proclaimed and shared its universal values of freedom and independence. At the legation's request, Kračun agreed to send to Washington two adults ("emissaries") in Serbian national costume and two boys to participate in the celebration. If the waistcoat, belt and *opanci* (traditional Serbian footwear) were generally accepted as part of the Serbian national costume at that time,⁴⁶ the

⁴⁴ Бранко Лазаревић, *За уједињење, чланци и расправе*, (Питсбург, Американски Србобран, 1919), 187.

⁴⁵ Архив Југославије (АЈ), фонд 371, Посланство у Вашингтону, фасцикла 49, Српско посланство В. Крачуну, Вашингтон, 28. јуна 1919.

⁴⁶ Милка Јовановић, „Народна ношња у Србији у 19. веку према делима путописаца“, *Гласник Етнографског института САНУ*, XXII, Београд (1973), 211–220.

question of what kind of cap the Serbian participants in the celebration would wear was not clear. That's why the embassy suggested that the two participants of the celebration "wear our šubara or šajkača, but not a fez." Although in occupied (1878) and annexed (1908) Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary, the fez was worn by both Christians and Muslims, this intervention by the Serbian legation was certainly influenced by the Serbian experience of the First World War. During the war, officers and soldiers of Bosniak infantry regiments in the Austro-Hungarian army that fought against the Allies wore red fez on their heads. The Serbian legation did not want the representatives of the victorious Serbs at the celebration in Washington to remind of the enemy soldiers who had become citizens of the new Kingdom SHS, against whom Serbia had fought from the beginning of the war, and the USA from 7 December 1917, when they declared war on Austria-Hungary.

In addition, in the context of the Italian-South Slavic dispute at the Peace Conference in Paris⁴⁷ regarding the territories on the eastern Adriatic, in Istria, Rijeka (Fiume), Kvarner (Quarnaro) and Dalmatia, the Serbian legation in Washington asked Kračun to send from Philadelphia another envoy who should "definitively have a Dalmatian hat."⁴⁸ The embassy defined the Dalmatian cap as made of red felt and similar in shape to the "Montenegro cap", which was not described because it was assumed that it was known to everyone. The new participant was supposed to represent a Dalmatian, regardless of whether he was a Croat or a Serb, holding fishing net in his hands and sitting in the most visible, front part of the cart, who would be dressed to represent the Adriatic Sea coast that the newly proclaimed state claimed against Italy. Immediately after arriving in Washington in the morning of July 4th, all participants were supposed to report to the Serbian legation in order to receive instructions for their appearance at the celebration.

Saint Sava Monastery in Libertyville, Illinois: Serbian gathering on Decoration Day (May 30) and Labor Day (first Monday in September)

With the efforts of Archimandrite Mardarije Uskoković, who came to the USA in 1917, after twelve years of schooling in Russia, the construction of the Serbian Orthodox monastery of Saint Sava in Libertyville, Illinois, began in 1923, according to the idea of the Russian architect Aleksey Zakharov. The monastery

⁴⁷ Ferdo Šišić (prir.), *Jadransko pitanje na Konferenciji mira u Parizu*, zbirka dokumenata, (Zagreb, Matica Hrvatska, 1920); Andrej Mitrović, *Jugoslavija na konferenciji mira 1919–1920*, (Beograd, Zavod za izdavanje udžbenika, 1969).

⁴⁸ AJ, 371-49, Српско посланство В. Крачуну, Вашингтон, 28. јуна 1919.

became a symbol of the Serbian presence in the USA. It was designed to have twelve domes that symbolized the twelve apostles and thirteenth, the highest dome, that symbolized Jesus Christ. It was founded on 7 September 1925, and the First Great Church-People's Assembly, where important decisions for emigration and the church were made, was held on 29 and 30 May 1927. Both dates are tied to the American holidays of Labor Day (the first Monday in September 1925) and Decoration Day (May 30; Memorial Day since 1942). Labor Day is a national holiday that has been celebrated since the end of the 19th century to honor the American labor movement and the contribution of workers to the development of the United States, while Decoration Day was dedicated to the memory of soldiers who had died throughout history while serving in the US military. Since that time, it has become a tradition for Serbs to gather twice a year at the monastery of St. Sava in Libertyville on those two American holidays. In addition to the symbolism of the integration of Serbs, mostly workers, into American society, these gatherings also had a practical character: they were national non-working holidays during which employees had more time to travel to Libertyville and have a private gathering.

*Vidovdan 1929: from Kosovo heroes and Serbian peasant soldiers
to Gavrilo Princip*

On the five hundred and fortieth anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo on 28 June 1929, Serbs celebrated Vidovdan within their church-school municipalities or various societies in the spirit of a church holiday in honor of Kosovo's heroes and all later fallen heroes. The effort of the Serbs from the time immediately after the First World War to tie the celebration of Vidovdan to the American tradition and make it acceptable to Croats and Slovenes subsided under the influence of daily preoccupation with earnings, bad relations within the Serbian communities and between Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in the USA. In addition, news came from the homeland about the Serbo-Croatian disputes that culminated in the introduction of the personal rule of King Alexander on 6 January 1929.

Nevertheless, the Serbian Orthodox Church and charitable societies continued to celebrate Vidovdan on a private basis. In South Chicago, for example, on 30 June 1929, Bishop Mardarije was planned to enter the newly built Serbian temple and hold the first bishop's liturgy with a memorial service in the sense of Vidovdan commemoration of the Kosovo heroes.⁴⁹ Diplomatic representatives of the state, some American friends and "our Slavs" who were invited

⁴⁹ „На знање”, *Американски Србобран/The American Srbobran*, Питсбург, 27 јун 1929, 3.

“as Tsar Lazar once invited” all those who had the welfare of their people at heart were supposed to be among the guests. Referring to the past in this case meant that there were many Croats and Slovenians in Chicago who could not be invited due to political, ideological and cultural disagreements. However, after the memorial service, a banquet was planned for those present, and in the evening a concert with a dance party. The participation of the “Sloboda” singing group and the Serbian tambura choir of the Popović brothers from Chicago were planned.

The Vidovdan celebration of the Serbian charity “Vojvoda Stevan Sindelić” from the small mining town of Miami in Arizona had a more secular character. The program consisted of a speech by the president of the society about the importance of Vidovdan, the singing of the American and Serbian national anthems and the performance of the local theater piece “Revenge – A Bloody Sarajevo Drama”, which was dedicated to Gavrilo Princip.

Vidovdan of 1929 also represented the fifteenth anniversary of Princip’s assassination of the Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand, an act with which many Serbs from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia and Slavonia identified.⁵⁰ However, this anniversary was mentioned only incidentally, for fear of serving as an inspiration for any kind of copying of that act directed against one of the rulers of the time. Princip was presented in the continuity of the heroes of many Serbian generations inspired by the Kosovo thought, and his action was put on the same level with the action of the Serbian army from the First World War. For the author of the editorial of *Amerikanski Srbobran* from 27 June 1929,⁵¹ Princip’s “heroic hand” led the “sinful” Austria-Hungary to ruin and led to the “freedom of Slavs”, while “our chivalrous army” of the best Serbian sons demarcated the borders of today’s “free and great fatherland.” Demanding the cooperation of all South Slavic “national individuals” in the USA and the homeland, without mentioning the personal regime of King Aleksandar, the author of the text expected the cultural and economic consolidation of the Kingdom of SHS, and presented this laconic attitude as the spirit of the “Kosovo covenant.”

⁵⁰ Stanislav Sretenovic, “Les images de Gavrilo Princip dans l’espace des Slaves du Sud, 1914–2014”, Robert Frank, Catherine Horel (dir.), *Entrer en guerre, 1914–1918: des Balkans au monde. Histoire, historiographies, mémoires*, (Bruxelles, Peter Lang, 2018), 379–396.

⁵¹ „Дан поноса и велике успомене“, *Американски Србобран/The American Srbobran*, Питсбург, 27. јун 1929, 1.

Vidovdan 1939: Kosovo's Heroes in the shadow of the "Famous Dinaric"

Vidovdan in 1939, on the 550th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, had a special significance for Serbian immigrants in the USA. For that date, the Third Convention of the Serbian People's Association, which had inherited the tradition of the oldest and most important Serbian association in America, was scheduled in the city of Youngstown, Ohio.⁵² Pressured by the feeling that in the 1930s there was a change of generations and a significant stratification among the Serbs in the USA, the delegates of the convention were supposed to resolve their differences and elect a "people's" leadership for the next four years.

In the Serbian expatriate press, as a warning to the participants of the congress, an easily comprehensible parallel was established between the disagreements of the Serbian dignitaries before the Battle of Kosovo and the disagreements within the alliance before the convention in Ohio. Salvation was "national harmony", and as historical examples of the harmony inspired by the Kosovo Covenant that had led to victory and progress, events from the history of Serbia were mentioned: the First Serbian Uprising in 1804 ("Karađorđe defeated the powerful Turkish empire with the handful of united folk") and the First World War ("three great empires and Bulgarian brother attacked the small united Serbia, so they fell and Yugoslavia was born").⁵³

However, in order to symbolically integrate the past of Serbia more easily into the past of the Serbs from the former Austria-Hungary, who made up a significant majority in the USA, the author of the editorial of *Amerikanski Srbobran* in the issue before Vidovdan, constructs the notion of the Famous Dinaric⁵⁴ by referring to the scientific authority of Jovan Cvijić⁵⁵ (1865, Loznica – 1927, Belgrade), where he underlined his Herzegovina origin. The Famous Dinaric has the synonym "Srbenda" and is defined according to a Cvijić quote in which the basic characteristic of the Dinaric race is the sacrifice "for the freedom, justice and

⁵² Адам Цигановић, „Уочи Видовдана”, *Американски Србобран/The American Srbobran*, Питсбург, 27 јун 1939, 2.

⁵³ „Наше робовање – Чему нас учи Видовдан?”, *Американски Србобран/The American Srbobran*, Питсбург, 27 јун 1939, 2.

⁵⁴ „Славни Динарац”, *Американски Србобран/The American Srbobran*, Питсбург, 27 јун 1939, 1.

⁵⁵ Jovan Cvijić, *La Peninsule balkanique: géographie humaine*, (Paris, A. Colin, 1918) ; Јован Цвијић, *Балканско полуострво и јужнословенске земље: основе антропогеографије*, I, (Београд, Државна штампарија КСХС, 1922 ; Јован Цвијић, *Балканско полуострво и јужнословенске земље: основе антропогеографије*, II, (Београд, Гeca Кон, 1931).

revenge of Kosovo.” From that Dinaric, Serbian race a whole galaxy of Serbian historical and mythical figures, rulers, statesmen, artists, poets and scientists arose. Nikola Tesla and Mihajlo Pupin were at their head, Ivan Meštrović was added to them, but not the Obrenović and Petrović dynasties. The majority of Serbs in the USA could also identify with the following construction of the author: that they have “a history that has no equal”, that they “sang folk songs”, that they are originally “shepherds and goatherds” who created the “Tenth Banovina” in America with “faith in God and themselves”. Imagining the Tenth Banovina of the Dinaric People (Srbenda) in America evoked the legacy of the Law on the Name and Division of the Kingdom into Administrative Areas of 3 October 1929. In addition to the suggestion on how the delegates in Ohio should vote, this construction expressed the frustration of most Serbs in the US due to the difficult integration into American society and the loss of influence over the circumstances in the regions from which they came or were natives of. Perhaps it was also a remote criticism of unofficial information about negotiations between Serbs and Croats on a new administrative division of the Kingdom in which Croatian demands would be satisfied.

**Identities between the experience of war and the fragmented memories
of the refugees of the royalist movement in the USA after 1945:
associations, monuments, cemeteries and churches**

Associations and their holidays

After the retreat of the Yugoslav Army fighters from the Homeland in 1945 to Austria, Germany and Italy, where they were placed in allied camps and their subsequent disarmament, on 1 October 1948, General Miodrag Damjanović⁵⁶ founded the Royal Yugoslav Army Combatants Association – Draža Mihailović in the Grossenbrode camp in Germany. It was the first association of ex-soldiers of the royalist resistance movement after the war. However, many fighters were discouraged by the experience and the outcome of the war in Yugoslavia and the victory of the communists, they feared reprisals, so they did not want to return to their country. On a symbolic level, the majority refused to join organizations that were identified with Yugoslavia, even the pre-war monarchy in which they had lived before the war. A significant majority of the soldiers of the Ravna Gora movement were made up of people who felt themselves to be

⁵⁶ Коста Николић, *Генерал Миодраг М. Дамјановић „џика Бели”*, (Лондон, УБКЈБ ДМ, 2008).

Serbs and who believed that the Serbs had paid dearly for the creation of the Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia and for living in it, as well as the struggle to preserve the “Yugoslav” heritage during World War II. That is why among the many refugees of the monarchist resistance movement who had settled in the USA and Western Europe⁵⁷, there was a need to name their institutions and organizations as “Serbian” and “Chetnik”, which did not allude to the legitimate Yugoslav army defeated in the civil war in the homeland.

The first such association was the Local Committee of Serbian Chetniks, which was formed on 22 August 1951, in the premises of the St. Sava Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In front of about one hundred fighters of the Ravna Gora movement, who had fought in the Dinaric Chetnik Division (DČD) during the war, the Local Committee of Serbian Chetniks in Milwaukee was announced. Đoko Marić (1915, Tiškovac kod Srba in Lika – 2010, Milwaukee, Wisconsin), commander of the King Petar the Second regiment in the DČD during the war, was elected president of the committee; Stevo Rađenović from the village of Serb in Lika, deputy of the Yugoslav Radical Union in the 1930s, participant in the uprising in Serbia in 1941 and political adviser to *vojvoda* Momčilo Đujić was elected vice-president; Božo Sokolović (1925, Drvar – ?), publicist, former fighter of the Ravna Gora movement was elected secretary, and the treasurer was Gojko Grubor.

The formation of Chetnik committees continued in the USA (Gary, Indiana; Cleveland, Ohio; South Chicago, Illinois), Canada and Western Europe. This led to the convening of the First Chetnik Congress on 31 May 1952 in South Chicago, at which the formation of the Organization of Serbian Chetniks in the Free World (OSČSS) was announced. Momčilo R. Đujić (1907, Kovačić near Knin – 1999, San Diego, California), commander of the DČD, was elected president of this organization; Vice President was Đoko Marić; secretary was Nedeljko Plečaš, captain of the Ravna Gora movement during the war, and Boško Nanić was the treasurer. However, shortly after its creation, this organization began to split into two camps over the issue of the fight against communism in Yugoslavia, which on the international level, in the context of the Tito-Stalin split in 1948, increasingly received the support of the USA. The war veterans who followed M. R. Đujić advocated cooperation with the former politicians of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, not only Serbian but also Slovenian, while the veterans gathered around *vojvoda* Dobroslav Jevđević opposed it. The split occurred after the congress of the OSČSS in

⁵⁷ Stanislav Sretenović, “Les exilés sud-slaves en France, 1945-1956”, Antoine Marès (sous la dir.), *Exils d'Europe médiane en France dans la seconde moitié du XXème siècle*, (Paris, Institut d'études slaves, 2017), 35–53.

1957. However, the split was not only political, but also symbolic: Đujić's camp referred to the Serbian state tradition that had developed since the First Serbian Uprising in 1804 and led to the creation of the South Slavic state, while Jevđević's camp was tied to the tradition of the spiritual unity of the Serbian people built in the past on all territories where Serbs had lived and the contribution of Serbs from the Habsburg Monarchy to the unification of "all Serbian lands" in 1918.

After the split of the Organization of Serbian Chetniks in the Free World (1952–1958), two associations of veterans of the Ravna Gora movement were proclaimed. Thus, symbolically on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, invoking the First Serbian Uprising, on 15 February 1958 in Gary (Indiana), the Movement of Serbian Chetniks "Ravna Gora" (PSČ RG) was proclaimed, headed by Momčilo Đujić as president. Three months later, on 31 May 1958, in Harbor (Indiana), the day after the American Memorial Day (May 30), the Organization of Serbian Chetniks "Ravna Gora" (OSČ RG) was proclaimed, with Đoko Marić elected as its president. The honorary president was Dobroslav Jevđević (1895, Miloševac near Pale – 1962, Rome), and the secretary was journalist and publicist Božidar Božo Sokolović, born in 1925 in Drvar, who had joined the Ravna Gora movement during the war as a very young man, and in 1949, together with his parents Sima and Stanislava, emigrated to the USA.

In 1959, the Central Committee of the OSČ RG, with the participation of all local committees in the USA, celebrated the Day of the Unification of Serbians (*srpstvo*) – November 26, in South Chicago.⁵⁸ On that day in 1918, the Great National Assembly of the Serbian People from Montenegro ("Podgorica Assembly") proclaimed the unification with the people of the Kingdom of Serbia and the overthrow of the Petrović dynasty in favor of the Karađorđević dynasty.⁵⁹ In the period between the two world wars, November 26 was celebrated on the territory of Montenegro, in Podgorica, Nikšić and Cetinje, as the Day of the Unification of Montenegro and Serbia,⁶⁰ based on the private initiative of opponents of the former Petrović dynasty, who organized special committees for that celebration.⁶¹ In the 1930s, with the deterioration of internal relations between Serbs and Croats in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, in the context of plans for the internal reorganization of the state and the creation of three administrative units with

⁵⁸ Бојидар Соколовић, „Прослава Дана Уједињења Српства”, *Четнички гласник*, 33-34, Milwaukee, WI, Децембар 1959–Јануар 1960, 13.

⁵⁹ *La question monténégrine: rapports et documents*, (Paris, L'Emancipatrice, 1919).

⁶⁰ Лазар Дамјановић, „Дан уједињења 26 новембра 1918”, *Слободна мисао*, Никшић, 27. новембар 1938, 1–2.

⁶¹ „Кратке вијести. Програм прославе дана уједињења Црне Горе и Србије”, *Ibid.*, 7.

Croatian, Serbian and Slovenian majorities, November 26 symbolically competed with the national holiday of December 1, which was officially celebrated throughout the country as the Day of the Unification of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

These celebrations before World War II were probably attended by many future fighters of the Ravna Gora movement originating from Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia who fled to the USA after the war and took their old memories with them. The experience of war, refugees and splits within the Ravna Gora veterans' association in the USA influenced a new symbolic interpretation of November 26. The members of the OSČ RG saw the meaning of the celebration of the 41st anniversary of the Day of the Unification of Serbianess in 1959 in calling for the breakthrough of the Salonika front in September 1918 and its consequences – the unification of all the territories of the former Austro-Hungarian monarchy where Serbs lived with Serbia and Montenegro. For them, the celebration meant not only the memory of the unification of Montenegro and Serbia on 26 November 1918, but also the proclamations of many district and regional People's Councils with a Serbian majority from Austria-Hungary (in Vojvodina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Dalmatia) on unification with Serbia into "all Serbian countries" which were defined as a "common state framework" that had long been "spiritually united."⁶²

In fact, the true meaning of the celebration was given by Novica Popović (1886–1964), a Serb born in the village of Velica in Montenegro, who attended the Podgorica Assembly in 1918, was a member of the National Assembly in Belgrade from 1935 to 1938,⁶³ and during the war joined the movement before escaping to the US. As the president of the Serbian historical and cultural society "Njegoš" from Chicago and a witness of "those great days", at the age of 73, he held a lecture on the "unification of Serbia through the ages" at the celebration, in which he spoke about the history of "the will and sacrifice of the Serbian people of all provinces" that had been crowned with proclamations on unification with Serbia in 1918. The lecturer wanted to outline "these historical facts" to the "younger people" which he said "historians" had "skillfully" skipped and dismissed without reference, dealing with 1 December 1918, "which turned out to be inconsistent with what it was supposed to serve." In addition, the president of the OSČ RG Đoko Marić said that the Day of the Unification of Serbia was a great Serbian national holiday "which the Serbs must not forget" and expressed the

⁶² Божидар Соколовић, „Прослава Дана Уједињења Српства”, *Четнички гласник*, 33–34, Milwaukee, WI, Децембар 1959–Јануар 1960, 13.

⁶³ Новица М. Поповић, *Говори и интервенције у Народној скупштини*, (Београд, Јовановић, 1938), 54.

hope that it would fuel the generations from whom he expected unification to be the main goal of all Serbian efforts and their endeavors in the future.

Although the celebration was held on Saturday, 14 November 1959, as 26 November was a working day, its success was disappointing. There were only 150 visitors at the celebration, although there had been twice as many people at previous cultural events. The reason was practical: in those days, there was an unexpected break in the four-month strike in the steel mills around Chicago, where Serbs had traditionally worked.⁶⁴ The end of the strike forced factory owners to require workers to work weekends and overtime “12 hours a day” to make up for lost time.

Church Schism (1963–1992) and the first Serbian royalist monuments in the USA

At the Tenth Church-National Assembly, held in November 1963 in the USA, it was decided not to accept any decisions and resolutions from the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church from Belgrade while the communist regime ruled in Yugoslavia. A schism then occurred within the Serbian Orthodox Church, which also had its own legal dimension before the American court.⁶⁵ The schism affected the entire Serbian community in the US, causing divisions in personal relationships, religion, politics, ideology, economics, culture and symbolism.

In the context of the church schism, the OSČ RG together with the Royal Yugoslav Army Combatants Association – “Draža Mihailović”, founded in 1948 by General Damjanović, sided with Bishop Dionisije Milivojević (1898, Rabrovac near Mladenovac – 1979, Libertyville) and the Free Serbian Orthodox Church (the so-called “dissenters”) based in the Saint Sava Monastery in Libertyville, Illinois. At the same time, the PSC RG sided with the Belgrade Patriarchate (the so-called “federals”) and proclaimed the Serbian Chetnik Movement “Gavrilo Princip” (SČP GP). The members of the new association were attached to the tradition of Vidovdan in 1914 and Princip’s assassination of Franz Ferdinand.

While disagreements between Serbs were still simmering, symbolically, on American Memorial Day, 30 May 1963, in front of the Saint Sava Monastery in Libertyville, a dedicated monument to Serbian Brothers Help or “SBH Memorial” was unveiled.⁶⁶ Serbian Brothers Help was a humanitarian, non-political organization to help Serbs in exile, which was created at the founding assembly held

⁶⁴ Божидар Соколовић, „Прослава Дана Уједињења Српства”, *Четнички гласник*, 33–34, Milwaukee, WI, Децембар 1959–Јануар 1960, 13.

⁶⁵ National Archives and Records Administration at Chicago (NARA Ch), Record Group: US District Courts (RG 21), Illinois – Cases, Box 577, Case number 63C/885.

⁶⁶ „Warrior Salutes”, *The Diocesan Observer*, Libertyville, ILL., September 15, 1965, 2.

on 17 June 1950 in that monastery. The organization was founded by soldiers and officers, veterans of the royalist movement from 1941 to 1945, with the support of Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović,⁶⁷ who gave it its name. Major Milutin P. Lilić from Ravna Gora Movement was elected as its first president. The consecration of the monument was performed by Bishop Dionisije with the assistance of seven priests and in the presence of 8,000 people, including members of the SBH led by Ranko Ignjatović from Chicago who financed its construction.

The monument, about five meters high, is modernist in form: above two open arches that intertwine, reminiscent of the arches of the Orthodox church that make up the vault, there is a cross made of stainless steel, and below it, suspended on a net, is the coat of arms of the SBH. Supported on four columns without walls that support the vault, there are four stainless steel plates inscribed with the names of deceased veterans of the Serbian royalist movement who had founded a humanitarian organization in 1950. The monument was supposed to establish continuity with future generations who would come there to pay their respects to their ancestors: places were left on the plaques to write the names of the members of the organization after their death; at the foot of the monument there was another cross buried in the ground and surrounded by a place for flowers; places for flowers are also located on the three remaining sides of the monument, towards which there is also a bench for sitting in a soothing environment. On all four large plaques with the names of the deceased, there are inscriptions in the Serbian language in Cyrillic in honor of the victory of “law and justice”, which referred to the feeling of former warriors and humanitarians that they were unfairly called “traitors” and perhaps condemned in absentia by the communist authorities in the homeland. The unveiling of the monuments on Memorial Day symbolically meant tying them to the universal values that had been commemorated by fallen American soldiers throughout history.

The monument to Draža Mihailović or “Draza Memorial”, whose author had emigrated together with the soldiers of the Ravna Gora movement, was consecrated two years later, also symbolically, on the American Independence Day, 4 July 1965, by Bishop Dionisije and 14 priests, in the presence of 11,000 people, including the committee for erecting a monument led by Dušan Petković.⁶⁸ The Draža monument was erected near the SBH monument, facing the St. Sava Monastery, which symbolized freedom, but also the “warship” of the “dissenter” against the “federals”

⁶⁷ Dragan Bakic, Vladimir Cvetkovic (Ed.), *Bishop Nikolaj Velimirovic: old controversies in historical and theological context*, (Belgrade, Institute for Balkan Studies SASA, Los Angeles, St. Sebastian Press, 2022).

⁶⁸ „Warrior Salutes”, *The Diocesan Observer*, Libertyville, ILL., September 15, 1965, 2.

in the church crisis that had engulfed the Serbian Orthodox Church in America. It was built by Serbs from New York who had collected money through public contributions. The monument, about three meters high, represents a bronze figure of Draža, as his comrades remembered him: in a “Chetnik uniform” with a *šajkača* hat and a cockade. It is in the form of a bust that turns into a statue up to the waist, placed on a part made of bricks covered with marble in the colors of the Serbian flag. The entire structure was placed on a rough and solid stone pedestal that resembled the ordinary stone graves of Serbian peasant soldiers. On all four sides of the monument, there were bronze plates with inscriptions. On the front plate was an inscription in Serbian Cyrillic: “Dragoljub Draža Mihailović, born on 27 April 1893; died 17 July 1946.” The plaque on the back reminded in Serbian that he was born in freedom and died in treason, without mentioning the name of the traitor: “Freedom gave birth to me, and betrayal killed me.” Placards on the side called on the Serbs to finish his “unfinished business” of the fight for freedom with the verse of the Chetnik war song “Get ready, Chetniks.” A wreath was carved in the middle of the monument, and in front of it were two urns for lighting candles.

His death and its symbolism were explained by the author of the article in *The Diocesan Observer*, the English-language outlet of the “free” diocese based in Libertyville: Draža was shot by Tito’s partisans and buried in an unknown place because the communists thought that “Serbian resistance to tyranny” would disappear with his remains. In the spirit of the interpretation of the Serbian past characteristic of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, the author expressed the wish that the act of murdering Mihailović would be an inspiration to “all Serbs and their future generations” to continue the fight, establishing a parallel with the consequences of the Ottomans burning of the relics of St. Sava in 1594, which was incorrectly associated with the Middle Ages in the text. As we have already seen, according to Serbian church and folk tradition, the burning of the relics of St. Sava not only did not extinguish the awareness of him among the people, but it entrenched it even more and encouraged the constant struggle for freedom throughout history. Mihailović’s sacrifice was therefore linked to freedom, so the achievement of universal freedom was the symbolic message of the unveiling of the monument on American Independence Day.

The *Diocesan Observer* newspaper encouraged the integration of Serbs into American society based on Serbian, American and universal values of justice and freedom, which was emphasized in the first issue, published on 15 September 1965⁶⁹ in the context of the church schism. The outlet of the “dissenters” was published

⁶⁹ Milan Karlo, “Statement”, *The Diocesan Observer*, Libertyville, ILL., September 15, 1965, 1.

once a week in English, and the editorship was entrusted to Milan Karl, born in 1913 in Pittsburgh to parents who had emigrated from Lika at the beginning of the 20th century, who had just finished a twenty-year engagement as editor of the English section of *Amerikanski Srbobran* from Pittsburgh. The goal of this paper was to collect as much information as possible about the events in the Serbian colonies throughout the USA and Canada in order to influence them, and the circulation was about 30,000 copies. Readers were invited to send letters, announcements and reports on encounters, group trips and the development of their colonies.

In addition, the new weekly symbolically “appropriated” the SBH monument and linked it to the Mihailović monument, even though it had been unveiled just before the split. According to the author of the editorial, both monuments were dedicated to the national ideals defined by the Church of the Serbian Orthodox Diocese for the United States and Canada.⁷⁰ The monuments symbolized the “glorious past of Serbia before Tito”, when the church had been “inseparable from the people.” The attached picture represented the geography of the memories of the “dissenters”: in the same frame one can see the monuments of the Serbian Brothers Help and Draža Mihailović and the monastery of St. Sava in Libertyville. The picture is accompanied by a text underlining that in front of the monument, 24 Serbian national associations expressed their loyalty to their diocese during the church struggle (schism) of that time. In order to underline the widest possible generational support, it was emphasized that among them there were old and young, born in the USA and abroad.

* * *

Serbs in the USA were never numerous, nor did American society pay special attention to them. The largest number of Serbs came to the USA from the Habsburg Monarchy or, later, from the western parts of the South Slavic state and were of rural origin. From generation to generation, Serbs were torn between multi-ethnic states (the Habsburg Monarchy, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes/Yugoslavia, communist Yugoslavia) and nations (Serbian, American, and the yet to be constructed Yugoslav), adapting their identities to changing political and ideological circumstances. Nevertheless, the Serbs wanted to integrate into American society, but at the same time to slow down their assimilation by maintaining the Orthodox faith and the culture of epic folk poems that they had brought from their homeland. It was a long process in which they tied their identities to the universal values of American and Serbian culture of freedom, independence, law, justice and progress.

⁷⁰ „Za Boga i Narod”, *The Diocesan Observer*, Libertyville, ILL., September 15, 1965, 1.