

## SERBS IN VOJVODINA IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY – NATIONAL IDENTITY IN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL DISCOURSE

**Abstract:** *The article presents the results of the research of expressions of national identity in the autobiographical narratives of Serbs from Vojvodina in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Serbian literature, the tradition of this genre was conceived in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the Habsburg Monarchy. Striking descriptions of personal experiences, impressions and feelings influenced the reach of Serbian historiography, but also the process of constructing the concept of modern Serbian national identity, as well as representations, including stereotypes, about Serbs who lived outside their home country until 1918. Autobiographical sources provide an insight into the individual experiences of Serbs in a multinational environment in a specific historical context, but also the possibility of a comparative analysis of factors of continuity and changes in the understanding of national identity in wider chronological boundaries. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, new works were published that bore witness to the revisiting of the Serbian national identity in a multinational society, characteristic of the area of today's Vojvodina, as well as to the process of Serbian national integration in the Yugoslav state. The paper is an attempt to point out the autobiographical discourse on national identity as an important aspect of studying the history of Serbs in Vojvodina in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The research has showed that in the autobiographical works created in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there is continuity in the effort to share the subjective concept of national identity with the widest public. The popularity of this type of literature indicates its power to influence the historical consciousness and national identity of future generations.*

**Keywords:** national identity, nationalism, Serbia, Vojvodina, Serbs, Vojvodina people, historical sources, autobiographies, memoirs, mementos, diaries

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and in the first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it has been increasingly obvious that popular theories of nationalism are not sufficient to understand and explain the conflicts of different national communities, both

in Europe and around the world.<sup>1</sup> Scholars from various fields call for a revisiting of prevailing approaches in the study of nationalism as a social, political and historical phenomenon.<sup>2</sup> Some believe that it is necessary to pay more attention to the subjective “living of the nation”, the process of shaping individual national identity and its transformation in different stages of the life cycle, in different historical circumstances.<sup>3</sup> For such an approach, autobiographical historical sources are of key importance: diaries, memories, mementos, correspondence, journalistic and literary works with autobiographical elements.<sup>4</sup> Writing about one’s own life, personal past, experiences, thoughts and feelings is characteristic of the modern era.<sup>5</sup> It became the subject of interdisciplinary scientific research in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup>

From the historian’s perspective, the literary qualities of this type of historical sources generally have a secondary importance in relation to their content, that is, data and interpretations of events and phenomena, as well as the possibility of their comparison with other available historical sources. Autobiographical historical sources bear witness to experiences and emotions from the past, but usually also contain an interpretation of experiences and emotions lived in a specific time (time of experience, time of narration) and space, that is, in a specific personal, historical and geographical context.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See: Umut Özkırmlı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction. Third edition* (London: Macmillan Education, Palgrave, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Raúl Moreno-Almendral, „Nationhood as Practice and the Modernity of Nations: A Conceptual Proposal”, *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 49, no. 1 (2021), 12–29. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2019.114>

<sup>3</sup> Ville Kivimäki, Sami Suodenjoki, Tanja Vahtikari, “Lived Nation: Histories of Experience and Emotion in Understanding Nationalism”, in: *Lived Nation as the History of Experiences and Emotions in Finland, 1800–2000*, Kivimäki, Ville, Sami Suodenjoki, and Tanja Vahtikari, eds. (Palgrave Studies in the History of Experience. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 1–28.

<sup>4</sup> Raúl Moreno-Almendral, „Reconstructing the History of Nationalist Cognition and Everyday Nationhood from Personal Accounts”, *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 24, no. 3 (2018), 648–668. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12427>

<sup>5</sup> James Olney, „Autobiography and the Cultural Moment: A Thematic, Historical, and Bibliographic Introduction”, in: *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 3–27.

<sup>6</sup> Georges Gusdorf, „Conditions and Limits of Autobiography”, in: *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 28–48.

<sup>7</sup> See: Christopher David Ely, *This Meager Nature: Landscape and National Identity in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002); Hans Renes, *Landscape, Heritage, and National Identity in Modern Europe* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022).

Subjective interpretations of the past have the potential to be more convincing than scientific historiography.<sup>8</sup> Narrating in the first person singular encourages readers to have an emotional reaction, to identify with the author, to question and compare their own experiences and emotions with the experiences and emotions of the main character of the autobiographical narrative. The narrator and the hero are not the same person, and the level of trust of the readers, the measure of identification or empathy with the hero mainly depends on the coherence of the narration, the proportion between the subjective statement and a verifiable statement, between the known and the unknown, between what is said and the feeling that something was left unsaid. The writer's national identity often appears as a topic, especially if belonging or not belonging to a national community played an important role in the author's life, if it had a significant impact on life experiences, on the relationship of the social surroundings towards the author. Such texts have encouraged and encourage readers to question the personal feeling of belonging to a certain nation and the social consequences of that belonging or not belonging.<sup>9</sup>

The development and popularity of autobiographical narration in Western and Central Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries was prompted by new approaches in various fields of scientific and artistic works: empiricism, individualism, subjectivism, expressionism, romanticism, nationalism.<sup>10</sup> Following European models, Serbs who lived in the Habsburg Monarchy, in a distinctly multi-ethnic, multi-confessional and multilingual society, began to write about their "living as a nation." Such autobiographical works existed before the Serbian Revolution and during the birth of modern Serbia, i.e. both before and after the idea of territorial autonomy of Serbs in the Habsburg Monarchy and the proclamation of Serbian Vojvodina in Sremski Karlovci (1848). Historians constantly re-read the autobiographical writings of Simeon Piščević (1731–1798), Dositej Obradović (?–1811), Sava Tekelija (1761–1842), literary and journalistic works of Joakim Vujić (1772–1847), Jovan Sterija Popović (1806–1856), Jakov Ignjatović (1822–1889), Đorđe Stratimirović (1822–1908), Mihailo Polit Desančić (1833–1920) and other authors.

<sup>8</sup> Чедомир Попов, „Мемоари као историјски извор и као интерпретација историје”, in: Чедомир Попов, *О историји и историчарима* (Нови Сад: Издавачка књижарница Зорана Стојановића, 1999), 49–60.

<sup>9</sup> Anthony P. Cohen, „Personal Nationalism: A Scottish View of Some Rites, Rights, and Wrongs”, *American Ethnologist*, 23, no. 4 (1996), 802–815. <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1996.23.4.02a00070>.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Folkenflik, „Introduction: The Institution of Autobiography”, in: *The Culture of Autobiography: Construction of Self-Representation*, ed. Robert Folkenflik (Stanford University Press, 1993), 8. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781503622043>

The literary works of Serbs from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (poetry, short stories, novels, comedies, plays) succeeded and continues to successfully find their way to readers, as well as to viewers of theater performances, during the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is justified to assume that the descriptions of subjective experiences, impressions and feelings related to personal national and confessional identification played a significant role in the construction of the modern Serbian national identity, both in the past, in the present, and could play such role in the future.<sup>11</sup>

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Slobodan Jovanović, thinking about the possibilities of studying the Serbian “national character”, in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, pointed out that “the ideas that a nation has about itself, about its historical destiny, about its unrealized ideals, are originally expressed in folk traditions and legends, and later in the works of its politicians, writers, and even scientists.” Some authors manage to stand out as “interpreters of national self-awareness and builders of what could be called national ideology.”<sup>12</sup> Mihajlo Pupin (1858–1937) is one of the most prominent among the Serbs originating from the area of today’s Vojvodina, who could be said to have played an important role in the creation of Serbian national identity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He achieved this with exceptional scientific achievements, but also with his autobiographical work.<sup>13</sup>

Mihajlo Pupin’s autobiography was published after the First World War and for a whole century it managed to encourage readers to reconsider their personal national identity, regardless of the language in which they read this work and regardless of where they lived. Pupin wrote his biography in English for American readers as well. The first edition was published in 1924.<sup>14</sup> The book was extremely popular as a kind of affirmation of ideas about the “American dream”, that is, the belief that every citizen of the United States of America has the

<sup>11</sup> See: Александра Вулетић, Радош Љушић, Радомир Ј. Поповић (ур.), *Перо и повест. Српско друштво у сећањима* (Београд: Филозофски факултет, 1999).

<sup>12</sup> Сlobодан Јовановић, „Један прилог за проучавање српског националног карактера”, in: Сlobодан Јовановић, *Из историје и књижевности*, II (Београд: БИГЗ, Југославијапублик, Српска књижевна задруга, 1991), 543–554.

<sup>13</sup> Славко Бокшан, „Читуља: Михаило Пупин – велики добротвор Историског друштва: 4. октобра 1858, Идвор - + 12. марта 1935, Њујорк”, *Гласник Историског друштва у Новом Саду*, књ. 8, св. 2 (1935), 315–336.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Pupin, *From Immigrant to Inventor* (New York [etc.]: Charles Scribner’s sons, 1923, 1926<sup>2</sup>).

opportunity to rise from the bottom to the top of the social ladder, based solely on personal merit. In the explanation for awarding the prestigious Pulitzer Prize (“For Biography”), it was pointed out that Mihailo Pupin’s work was teaching patriotism and selfless service to the people, that it could be compared even with the biographies of the “fathers” of the American nation, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.<sup>15</sup> In the preface to the second edition, Pupin particularly emphasized that the hundreds of letters he had received after the first publication of his autobiography convinced him that young Americans, whom he primarily thought of while writing, found in his biography inspiration and encouragement to overcome obstacles in achieving personal life goals.<sup>16</sup>

In his autobiography, Pupin presented himself as an intelligent, physically dexterous and agile shepherd from Banat, who managed to acquire an academic education and become a scientist, inventor and university professor at a prestigious American university. He began his story by describing in detail the historical conditions and factors shaping the national identity. A key role in Pupin’s national identification was played by family gatherings where stories about ancestors and the past of the Serbs as a national community were told. The Great Migration of 1690 had an exceptional significance in those stories. As a boy, Pupin imagined his ancestors among the “thirty-five thousand selected Serbian families”, who, led by the Patriarch Arsenije Čarnojević, moved from “Old Serbia” to Austria at the invitation of the Austrian Emperor Leopold I to “become its defenders there.”<sup>17</sup> For the Serbs, it is the Military Border in the Habsburg Monarchy, where they had “spiritual, economic and political autonomy.” They were given land in the Border, whose owners they were on the basis of a contract that they would defend Austria “against all its enemies”, not only from the Turks. Such a status enabled the Serbs to be free from feudal obligations towards the local nobility and autonomous in developing a national and religious community. In the

<sup>15</sup> „For the best American biography teaching patriotic and unselfish services to the people, illustrated by an eminent example, excluding, as too obvious, the names of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln,” <https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/michael-idvorsky-pupin>.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Pupin, *From Immigrant to Inventor* (New York, London: Charles Scribner’s sons, 1949).

<sup>17</sup> According to the preserved notes of the painter Paja Jovanović, the scientist’s distant ancestor, Vuko Pupin, found himself in the center of one of the versions of Jovanović’s painting *Migration of the Serbs*, and was painted based on the figure and liking of Mihajlo Pupin, whose portrait Jovanović had made in America at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Branko Bešlin, „Visual Aspects of the Serbian Entrance in a New World”, in: *Yearbook of the Society for 18th Century Studies on South Eastern Europe. Voices from an era of transition. South Eastern Europe in the 18th Century*, 1 (2018), 77–78.

villages in the Military Border, the Serbs had the right to independently take care of “their own school and church, and each village elected its own administration.” The village *knez* or elder was usually “some slightly peasant”, as, for example, Pupin’s father was, “several times.”

In the Military Border in Banat, the contacts of Serbs with members of other ethnic, religious or linguistic communities were minimized. In Pupin’s native village of Idvor, according to his memory, “no nation other than Serbian has ever lived.” On the other hand, the Serbs from Idvor have since time immemorial “considered themselves the brothers of the Serbs in Serbia, who were only a few rifle-ranges away from Idvor, on the south side of the Danube.” Moreover, when the sky was clear, from Idvor one could see Avala, a mountain near Belgrade, which for Pupin, when he was a boy, “was something special, it always seemed to remind the Serbs in Banat that the Serbs from Serbia were watching them with an eye full of tender attention.” As a boy, Mihajlo Pupin was an ardent Serbian nationalist, which influenced the course of his schooling in Pančevo, then in Prague. The highest authority in Pupin’s life was his mother Olimpijada, a pious woman, who “could not read or write”, but encouraged her son to study, convincing him that “the spirit of St. Sava” was watching over him.<sup>18</sup> She also supported his departure to America, as well as his efforts to continue his education at prestigious American and European universities. Although she made it clear to her son that she would not approve of a marriage with a German woman from Banat, she accepted his marriage with an American woman, as well as his complete transformation into a true “Anglo-Saxon gentleman”, provided he did not forget where he came from and who his ancestors were.<sup>19</sup>

*Matica Srpska* published a Serbian translation of Pupin’s autobiography in 1929.<sup>20</sup> One of the first and extremely commendable reviews of this book was written by Miloš Crnjanski (1893–1977). Even before this review, Crnjanski wrote about autobiographical literature, and he did it with enthusiasm. At the time when the American edition of Pupin’s autobiography was published, Crnjanski published an article in the newspaper *Politika* about the memoirs (“records”) of Simeon Piščević, expressing his regret that this work, a precious testimony of the life of Serbs in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was not known to Serbs living in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Михајло Пупин, *Са паињака до научењака* (Београд: Нолит, 1989), 5, 11–13, 17–18.

<sup>19</sup> Edward Ifkovic, „South-Slavic American Autobiography: Three Variations”, *MELUS* 10, 2, (1983), 54. <https://doi.org/10.2307/467309>

<sup>20</sup> Михајло Пупин, *Са паињака до научењака* (Нови Сад: Матица српска), 1929.

<sup>21</sup> In the article, Crnjanski pointed out that Piščević’s “records” were a valuable historical source about Serbs in Austria in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but, unfortunately, unknown to contemporaries of the 20<sup>th</sup>

By coincidence, Pupin's autobiography in the Serbian language and Miloš Crnjanski's novel entitled *Migrations*, inspired by Simeon Piščević's autobiography, were published in the same year.<sup>22</sup> Based on the autobiographical records of Simeon Piščević, Crnjanski constructed literary heroes of the novel about Serbs in the Habsburg Monarchy, about Serbs as border guards, "privileged" to fight and die throughout Europe, in order to preserve their national, i.e., linguistic and religious identity. In the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, a sense of threat developed among them due to the announcements of the abolition of the Military Border. Simeon Piščević, like many of his contemporaries, decided to leave the Habsburg Monarchy, to leave the Pannonian Plain and look for a new home in the northeast of Europe, in the Orthodox Russian Empire.<sup>23</sup>

The vivid dialogue with the past and ancestors, border guards from the time when Simeon Piščević lived, characteristic of Pupin's autobiography, delighted Miloš Crnjanski, to the same extent as the scientist's diverse and numerous talents. The review was published in the *Journal of the Historical Society in Novi Sad*, which was read mainly by historians and mostly by Serbs.<sup>24</sup> In the text, he particularly emphasized that this memoir convincingly showed that "literary fiction, imagined lives, events and destinies, seems almost meaningless, especially when compared to books whose content is true experience, suffering that really happened." Crnjanski presented the autobiography of "a man of science and inventions, who in the powerful, American world, worthily embodied our people", as a book that can be read "for pleasure, like, I guess, a book about the life of Dositej." He hoped that Pupin would be an inspiration for future generations as well.<sup>25</sup> It could be assumed that Crnjanski was referring to the future generations

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century: "Piščević's record is mentioned only in the great Russian lexicon, and only the Franklin Society from Pest remembered to publish them. They have remained completely unknown to us". Милош Црњански, „Записи ђенерала Пишчевића”, *Политика*, 15. мај 1924, 1. The Hungarian edition, mentioned Crnjanski, exists in the Matica Srpska Library: Imre Huszár, *Piscsevics orosz tábornok vándorlásai és kalandjai: sajtát elbeszélése* [Лутања и авантуре руског генерала Пишевича: његова сопствена приповест: испричана по словенском оригиналу] (Budapest: Franklin, 1904).

<sup>22</sup> Милош Црњански, *Сеобе: роман* (Београд: Издавачка књижара Геце Кона, 1929).

<sup>23</sup> Ђорђе Ђурић, „Од сеобе народа до 'Сеоба': 'Историја српског народа' Симеона Пишчевића”, in: Симеон Пишчевић, *Историја српског народа* (Нови Сад, Шид: Академска књига, Народна библиотека Симеон Пишчевић, 2018), 27–33.

<sup>24</sup> Mihajlo Pupin liked the portrayal of Miloš Crnjanski very much, as evidenced by his letters from 1930. Стојан Трећаков и Владимир Шовљански (прир.), *О Црњанском: архивалије* (Нови Сад: Матица српска, 1993), 99–100.

<sup>25</sup> Милош Црњански, „Михајло И. Пупин: Са пашњака до научењака. (From Immigrant to Inventor), Издање Матице српске, 1929”, *Гласник Историског друштва*, књ. 3, св. 2 (1930), 316–318.

of Serbs, although at that time the renown Novi Sad pedagogue Milan Šević (1866–1934) pointed out that a translation of Pupin’s work had also been published in Germany and recommended for school reading.<sup>26</sup>

In the Yugoslav state, at the moment when the “tribal” division of Yugoslavs became prohibited by law, Pupin and Crnjanski revived the memory of the Serbs in the Habsburg Monarchy and their role in the birth of modern Serbia. Pupin wrote about himself and relied primarily on his own memory. Crnjanski tried to base the persuasiveness of his narration on reliable historical sources.<sup>27</sup> This brought him into contact with Vasa Stajić (1878–1947), as a dedicated and reliable connoisseur of archival material on Serbs in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the final stage of preparing the manuscript of the novel *Migrations*, he corresponded with Stajić and received from him information about documents from the Metropolitan Archives in Sremski Karlovci, in which the Isaković’s were mentioned. Stajić also sent Crnjanski a copy of the will of Isak Isaković, who was, by all accounts, related to the real Vuk Isaković, on who’s liking the literary hero of the novel *Migrations* was born.<sup>28</sup>

In his correspondence with Crnjanski, when using the term “Vojvodina people”, Stajić was referring to the Serbs who lived in the Habsburg Monarchy in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The descendants of those Serbs closely followed, and many participated in the birth of modern Serbia during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They also played a crucial role in the annexation of Baranja, Bačka, Banat and Srem to the Kingdom of Serbia, thereby strengthening its role in the creation of the Yugoslav state in 1918. Although, similarly to Pupin and Crnjanski, he delved deeply into written traces of the life of Serbs in the past, Stajić’s knowledge of the past, interlaced with personal experiences, made him dissatisfied and disappointed. He expressed his feelings in *The Memorial to the Liberation of Vojvodina in 1918*, published the same year as the Serbian translation of Pupin’s autobiography and the novel *Migration* by Miloš Crnjanski.<sup>29</sup> The *Memorial* testifies that the autobiographical discourse among Serbs in Vojvodina between the two world wars was characterized by a focus on the historical turn of events that occurred after the Great War, on the role of individuals in the events that led to

<sup>26</sup> “It is strongly recommended that this book be acquired for school libraries”, was emphasized in a German review of Mihajlo Pupin’s autobiography. Милан Шевич, „О Пупиновом животопису”, *Летопис Матице српске*, књ. 322, св. 3 (1929), 464–465.

<sup>27</sup> Ђ. Ђурић, *op. cit.*, 14.

<sup>28</sup> С.Трећаков и В. Шовљански (прир.), *О Црњанском: архивалије*, 13–21.

<sup>29</sup> *Споменица Ослобођења Војводине: 1918* (Нови Сад: Штампарија Јовановић и Богданов, 1929).

that turn of events, but also on experiences from life in the Yugoslav kingdom during the first decade of its existence.<sup>30</sup>

Vasa Stajić, like Mihajlo Pupin, was born in Banat, but his national identity was shaped at a time when Serbia was already an independent European country and when the Serbian intellectual elite dreamed of a common state of all South Slavs. Only when he started to compile his autobiography during World War II did he establish, based on archival material, that his oldest ancestor's name was Vasilije, that he was probably born in Senta and was baptized in 1742, and then moved with his parents to Mokrin in 1751. That migration was prompted by hints about the abolition of the Potisje-Pomorišje Military Border, which led some Serbs to move towards Russia (Simeon Piščević, for example), and others to go to Banat, where they could retain the status of soldiers in the service of Empress Maria Theresa. Stajić, like Pupin, ran after sheep as a boy and very early showed a talent for learning. When he was 11, he was enrolled in the state high school in Kikinda, where classes were held in Hungarian. Despite the difficulties, he managed to finish the first grade. Stajić's decision to continue his education at the gymnasium in Sremski Karlovci testifies to his early independence. Thanks to his good grades, he enjoyed five years of a scholarship that covered tuition, accommodation and food. At an early age, he had neither the will nor the patience for the usual way of earning money for poor students – tutoring children from rich families. He also did not understand the custom of high school students participating in church ceremonies. He read socialist literature and did not feel like going to church, even at the cost of losing his scholarship and the right to finish his education in Sremski Karlovci. He passed the matriculation exam at the state high school in Senj, and then began studying French and German at the University of Pest as a Tökölyanum fellow. During his studies, he stayed in Paris in 1901, and in 1903 he visited Leipzig and Florence.<sup>31</sup> When he finished his studies, he worked as a professor in Pakrac, Pljevlja and Sombor. He was extremely popular among the students, to whom he became an “ideologist and spiritual leader.”<sup>32</sup> In Sombor, he founded the newspaper *Novi Srbin* and spread the network of his followers through that newspaper. He invited young men to join him in the “National

<sup>30</sup> Слободан Бјелица (прир.), *Ослобођење Новог Сада 1918: сведочанства и полемике* (Нови Сад: Новосадски клуб, Градска библиотека, 2018).

<sup>31</sup> Васа Стајић, „1878–1943. Ка аутобиографији”, in: Зорица Хаџић (прир.), *Васа Стајић: прилози за аутобиографију* (Нови Сад: Матица српска, 2017), 28–29, 46–49, 53–55, 61–62, 68.

<sup>32</sup> Рукописно одељење Матице српске (РОМС), М. 12.439, Рада Лунгулов, *Успомене. О раду српске национално-револуционарне омладине у Старој војводини у периоду од непосредно пре Балканског до 1914, непосредно пре Првог светског рата.*

Defense” organization, which had been established at the time of the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908, in order to gather volunteers and help in the event of a war between Serbia and Austria-Hungary, took them on “national awakening tours” to endangered “Serbian oases” in southern Hungary, as well as excursions to Serbia. On the eve of the First World War, he was dismissed from the teacher’s school in Sombor. He spent the war as a “prisoner” in Hungarian prisons, convicted as a Serbian and Yugoslav nationalist.<sup>33</sup>

Ten years later he was very disappointed. In the *Memorial to the Liberation of Vojvodina in 1918*, he described the reasons for his dissatisfaction with the role of Serbia, both in the creation of the Yugoslav state and in its organization after 1918. In the early autumn of 1918, he managed to escape from prison and reach Zagreb via Vienna, where the National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs had been established. There he was first disappointed by the Croatian nationalists (among whom Stjepan Radić was the loudest and most radical), and he was even more affected by the news that “Serbian nationalist Miladinović wants to rip Srem from Croatia.”<sup>34</sup>

When he arrived in Novi Sad, Stajić faced new disappointments, only to lose all illusions in Belgrade, in talks with the ministers of the Kingdom of Serbia. After four years of “captivity” and isolation, Vasa Stajić realized that fertile ground for his concept of “national unity” was nowhere to be found. He “fled” from Novi Sad before the Great People’s Assembly of Serbs, Bunjevci and other Slavs, because he did not agree with the idea of immediate annexation of Baranja, Bačka, Banat and Srem to the Kingdom of Serbia. Stajić’s disappointment reached its peak when he heard that the Serbs from his (and Pupin’s) hometown were condemning him because he allegedly “renounced Serbia.” It pained him that his Banatians had no understanding for his concept of “Yugoslavism.”<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, he had no understanding of Belgrade’s attitude towards multinational Vojvodina. He wrote about this a year earlier in a political brochure entitled *Vojvodani o Vojvodini (People of Vojvodina about Vojvodina)*. In his opinion, it was unacceptable that during the 1920s, “Serbians, Slovenes, and Dalmatians, all

<sup>33</sup> Биљана Шимуновић-Бешлин, „О ‘најдоследнијој доследности’ једног ‘Новог Србина’ (о Ради Лунгулову и Васи Стајићу)”, in: *Војвођански простор у контексту европске историје*, (Нови Сад: Филозофски факултет, Одсек за историју, 2012), 304–306.

<sup>34</sup> Ранко Кончар, „Политичке идеје Васе Стајића”, in: *Војвођански простор у контексту европске историје: зборник радова. Личности војвођанског простора, 2* (Нови Сад – Бачка Паланка: Филозофски факултет, 2014), 369.

<sup>35</sup> Васа Стајић, „Моје учешће у југословенском уједињењу”, in: *Споменица ослобођења Војводине 1918*. (Нови Сад: Штампарија Јовановић и Богданов, 1929), 156–159.

compatriots who are annoyed by an incomprehensible Hungarian or German word” were appointed to administrative bodies in Vojvodina, that the main “tone” in Vojvodina was set by “those who have moved here and who expect to move again, while those who, even if they are swayed by various winds, remain faithful to this soil, they are silent.”<sup>36</sup>

Stajić’s opponents pointed to the far-reaching negative consequences of emphasizing the similarities between Serbs and Croats, as opposed to the differences between Serbs from Vojvodina and Serbs from the Kingdom of Serbia, actively encouraging a schism between Serbs from Vojvodina and Serbian Serbs.<sup>37</sup> He was also criticized by Yugoslav nationalists, who gained momentum in 1929 when the country was reorganized by the unilateral will of the monarch. One of the largest among the nine new administrative-territorial units in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was named after the Danube and it united Vojvodina and Šumadija. This was necessary in order for the South Slavs in the Danube Banovina, at least in terms of numbers, to statistically prevail over the non-Slavic population. The Danube Banovina was supposed to be the embodiment of the unity of the Serbs from Vojvodina and Šumadija, as well as their loyalty to the Yugoslav state, as the writer Veljko Petrović (1884–1967), otherwise Stajić’s friend, publicly argued.<sup>38</sup>

The new order of the Yugoslav kingdom encouraged the young teacher of the Faculty of Law in Subotica, an ardent Yugoslav nationalist, Fedor Nikić (1894–1989), to announce in 1929 that Vojvodina had achieved its historical mission and that it was “a sacrifice among the last sacrifices, which the Serbian tribe has made in the interest of the common state.”<sup>39</sup> Moreover, Nikić believed that the oldest Serbian cultural and literary-publishing institution, Matica Srpska, based in Novi Sad, should be transformed into a nursery of Yugoslav nationalism. Nikić was a native of Srem, and he belonged to a group of young and energetic and ambitious people with university education. He had the support of distinguished peers, among whom the sociologist Mirko Kosić (1892–1956), the art historian Milan Kašanin (1895–1981) and the philosopher Svetislav Marić (1895–1971) stood out. Veljko Petrović,

<sup>36</sup> *Војвођани о Војводини* (Београд: Удружење Војвођана, 1928), 6–7, 29–30; Биљана Шимуновић-Бешлин, *Просветна политика у Дунавској бановини: 1929–1941*. (Нови Сад: Филозофски факултет, Одсек за историју, 2007), 88–89.

<sup>37</sup> Димитрије Кириловић, „Војвођани о Војводини”, *Гласник историског друштва у Новом Саду*, књ. 2, св. 1 (1929), 295–297.

<sup>38</sup> Биљана Шимуновић-Бешлин, *Просветна политика у Дунавској бановини: 1929–1941*. (Нови Сад: Филозофски факултет, Одсек за историју), 91–92.

<sup>39</sup> Федор Никић, „Ново стање. Опрштај са Војводином”, *Летопис Матице српске*, књ. 322, св. 2 (1929), 161–162.

ten years older, supported the young, but already professionally established Yugoslav nationalists, publicly stating that Matica Srpska should work for the “liberated and united, entire Serbian, that is, the Yugoslav people.”<sup>40</sup> The attempt of the Yugoslav nationalists to “conquer” Matica did not succeed. A quarter of a century later, in his *Autobiography*, which he had handed over to the Manuscript Department of Matica Srpska, Fedor Nikić described the entire action as a conflict between the “older” and the “younger”, noting that Vasa Stajić had not interfered in that conflict, but remained “on the sidelines”, as well as his closest friend, Novi Sad professor Milan Petrović (1878–1952).<sup>41</sup>

In the mid-1930s, Stajić also tried and succeeded in “conquering” Matica Srpska. He was elected president, but remained in that position for only one year. Initially, he received letters of unreserved support from numerous like-minded people, both Serbs and Croats. He was soon informed that his room for maneuver to reorganize Matica was smaller than he had expected. Historian Vaso Bogdanov (1902–1967), a native of Pančevo, was employed in the Croatian State Archives in Zagreb in the mid-1930s. In mid-November 1935, he warned Stajić that in Zagreb “great attention is paid to the political honesty of every individual, especially public workers” and that a kind of “moral cleansing” was being carried out in Matica Hrvatska. He told Vasa Stajić that one of his main duties was to free Matica Srpska from “all the regime, semi-regime and spineless elements of Vojvodina.” Miloš Crnjanski, according to Vasa Bogdanov, was “the most ordinary denouncer and the most miserable servant of the regime.” Stajić was told from Zagreb that “no honest intellectual (not even one from Vojvodina)” should cooperate with Crnjanski.<sup>42</sup> Feeling betrayed by the associates he counted on the most, Stajić resigned.<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps the feeling of guilty conscience led Stajić’s most loyal admirers, among whom was Isidora Sekulić (1877–1958), to publicly acknowledge him two years later on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday. In a special memorial, praise was given to his diligence, democracy, honesty, consistency and other respectable virtues. On that occasion, Milan Petrović testified authentically about Stajić’s national identity. Private life was a true reflection of Stajić’s attitude towards national identity. Vasa Stajić’s wife was Croatian, but in her marriage she had never felt “that she was not married to a Croat”, while her husband, a Serb, a descendant

<sup>40</sup> Biljana Šimunović, *Matica srpska i jugoslovensko društvo* (Beograd: Zadužbina Andrejević, 1997), 30–31.

<sup>41</sup> РОМС, М. 12.447. *Биографија др Федора Никића, проф. унив. у пензији, са библиографијом, за Матицу српску* (Београд, 30. XII 1955), 17.

<sup>42</sup> С. Трећаков и В. Шовљански (прир.), *О Црњанском: архивалије*, 101–106.

<sup>43</sup> В. Šimunović, *Matica srpska i jugoslovensko društvo*, 41–42.

of a border guard from Banat (like Pupin), had never felt “that he was not married to a Serbian woman.” Milan Petrović pointed out that details from private life may seem “small and insignificant” to some, but he invited the public to ask themselves: “Isn’t this harmony, however, the highest and most significant thing created by the spirit of Vasa Stajić?” Bigger and more significant than the new Serb and the new Vojvodina? Because, viewed through the prism of family life, both the new Serb and the new Vojvodina have gained their true meaning.”<sup>44</sup>

The Stajićs lived in Sremski Karlovci, and in the spring of 1941, this small town in Srem, which had played an exceptional role in the history of the Serbs in the Habsburg Monarchy, was included within the borders of Ustasha Croatia. Stajić’s diary entries from the war years testify that he experienced deep disappointment due to Ustasha crimes and mass suffering of Serbs. He hoped that 1941 was “the blackest in the history of Serbo-Croats, that it could not come blacker than that and that the peak of our misery is behind us, not ahead of us.” Nevertheless, he recorded his unsuccessful suicide attempt in September 1942, but the following year, in 1943, after the Allies had landed in Sicily, he made plans “about his life and work in Soviet Serbia or Yugoslavia.” However, Stajić’s faith in Yugoslavia was almost shattered by the news about the “bloody program of the Ustasha – to eradicate the Serbs from Bosnia, Herzegovina, Dalmatia and Croatia.” After four decades of harmonious relationship, the war also affected his attitude towards his wife: “while she is the kindest with the Ustashes, I cannot be kind to her, I sulk and keep silent.” It is not easy for me, and she, instead with me, had a great chat with them.”<sup>45</sup>

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During World War II, national identity in the area of Vojvodina, as well as throughout the Yugoslav state, became one of the most important criteria for the survival or threat of the right to life. Serbs, Jews and Roma suffered the most, but also communists, as the most determined political opponents of Nazism and fascism. The organizational structure of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was copied after the April War to the organization of the national liberation

<sup>44</sup> Милан Петровић, „Породични живот – који значи нешто више”, in: *Споменица Васи Стајићу (обновљено издање из 1938. године)* (Нови Сад: Војвођански клуб, Војвођанска академија наука и уметности, Историјски архив града Новог Сада, 2009), 160–165; Р. Кончар, *op. cit.*, 363–374.

<sup>45</sup> Васа Стајић, „У сутону живота. Други светски рат”, in: Зорица Хаџић (прир.), *Васа Стајић: прилози за аутобиографију* (Нови Сад: Матица српска, 2017), 212–214, 222, 237.

movement. Vojvodina had its place in that structure. The partisan movement aimed at both liberation and the revolutionary transformation of the state and society.<sup>46</sup> Communists in the Yugoslav kingdom was on the police lists for arrest even before the occupation and the resistance had no alternative for them. After the German attack on Poland, the willingness to make a conscious sacrifice became a party obligation. The spread of ideological formulas for the revolutionary transformation of society required the mobilization of the population to fight together against the occupation authorities and their collaborators, regardless of nationality, even at the cost of retaliation by the occupation authorities against the civilian population. The occupation authorities did not shy away from punishing civilians for any manifestation of resistance, and the victims in the various occupation regimes established in the area of today's Vojvodina were mostly Serbs, Jews and Roma.<sup>47</sup> When the war ended, national identity became fateful for Germans. They were expelled from Yugoslavia, which meant that almost a third of the population was evicted from Vojvodina.<sup>48</sup> The state seized from the Germans everything they owned and distributed their property to the colonists, among whom there were mostly soldiers from partisan units, disabled people and their families, as well as families of fallen soldiers and victims of the occupation authorities. Most of them were Serbs from parts of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, where in previous years they had suffered the most mass casualties. The cultural integration of Serbs in Vojvodina after World War II was not a simple task.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> See: Чедомир Попов (ур.), *Војводина у народноослободилачком рату и социјалистичкој револуцији: 1941–1945.* (Нови Сад: Филозофски факултет, Институт за историју, 1984); Чедомир Попов, Јелена Попов, *Аутономија Војводине – српско питање. Друго допуњено издање* (Сремски Карловци: Кровови, 2000).

<sup>47</sup> Јосип Мирнић, „Систем фашистичке окупације у Бачкој и Барањи”, *Зборник Матице српске за друштвене науке*, 35 (1963), 5–62; Шандор Вег, „Систем немачке окупационе власти у Банату: 1941–1944”, *Зборник Матице српске за друштвене науке*, 35 (1963), 63–104; Петар Вукелић, „Окупациона власт и систем националне дискриминације у Срему за време ‘Независне државе Хрватске’”, *Зборник Матице српске за друштвене науке*, 35 (1963), 105–138; Јованка Петковић, „Акција Виктора Томића у Срему”, *Зборник Матице српске за друштвене науке*, 35 (1963), 139–164; Звонимир Голубовић, „Рација јануара 1942. у јужној Бачкој”, *Зборник Матице српске за друштвене науке*, 35 (1963), 164–192.

<sup>48</sup> See: Zoran Janjetović, „Prilog proučavanju položaja folksdojčera u Jugoslaviji: 1944–1948”, *Istorija 20. veka*, 14, 1 (1996), 143–152; Zoran Janjetović, „Odlazak vojvođanskih Švaba – proterivanje ili iseljavanje”, *Токови историје*, 3–4, (1997), 111–117; Zoran Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito: the disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans* (Beograd: s.n. 2000) [2005<sup>2</sup>].

<sup>49</sup> Nikola L. Gačeša, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u Jugoslaviji 1945–1948.* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1984); Никола Л. Гаћеша, „Аграрна реформа и колонизација у Војводини 1945–

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Vasa Stajić aligned himself with the revolutionary government. He was elected as the first president of Matica Srpska in socialist Yugoslavia, but he no longer had the strength for big undertakings. His health was seriously impaired during the war and he died in early 1947.<sup>50</sup> His closest friend Milan Petrović, who was elected president of Matica when Stajić died, was also nearing the end of his life. He was already seriously ill when he published a series of fragments from his biography in *Letopis Matice Srpske*. He described his childhood and schooling in Novi Sad's Great Serbian Orthodox Gymnasium, youthful Serbian nationalism, personal doubts at the time of the creation of the Yugoslav state. His autobiographical writings attracted a lot of public attention. He was proclaimed as the best memoirist, a worthy successor of Dositej Obradović.<sup>51</sup> However, he died in the summer of 1952 and was quickly forgotten. He remained interesting only to historians, who found in his memory's vivid descriptions of the conditions in Novi Sad at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as personalities who played a significant role in the creation of the Yugoslav state in 1918.<sup>52</sup>

In 1952, the writer Veljko Petrović was elected president of Matica Srpska, who, like Stajić, cooperated with the revolutionary authorities. During his mandate, the *Novi Sad Agreement* on the Serbo-Croatian language as a common language of Serbs, Croats and Montenegrins was reached (1954). In accordance with that document, in 1960 Matica Srpska published the *Grammar of the Serbo-Croatian Literary Language* and the first volumes of the *Dictionary of the Serbo-Croatian Literary Language* (1967, 1969). Although it might have seemed that doubts about language, as the basis of national integration, had thus been resolved, the agreement very quickly turned into a reason for a debate and conflicts, and not only among linguists.<sup>53</sup>

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1948", in: Никола Л. Гаћеша. *Радови из аграрне историје и демографије* (Нови Сад: Матица српска, 1995), 450–477; Ivana Dobrivojević Tomić, „Problemi u naseljavanju i prilagođavanju kolonista na život u Vojvodini u prvim godinama posle Drugog svetskog rata”, *Istorija 20 veka*. 2 (2021), 313–332. <https://doi.org/10.29362/ist20veka.2021.2.dob.313-332>

<sup>50</sup> See: Ненад Дошлић, *Матица српска: 1941–1951*. (Нови Сад: Матица српска, 2011).

<sup>51</sup> Milan Petrović was a native of Čakovo in Banat, which is also the birthplace of Dositej Obradović.

<sup>52</sup> Биљана Шимуновић-Бешлин, „Заборањени мемоариста”, in: Милан Петровић. *Успомене* (Нови Сад: Градска библиотека, Матица српска, 2016), 9–66.

<sup>53</sup> See: Слободан Селинић, *Србија и језички сукоб у Југославији 1967*. (Београд: Институт за новију историју Србије, 2017); Вељко Ж. Брборић, „Језички спорови после ‘Новосадског

Veljko Petrović's Yugoslavism was unquestionable both during the monarchist and communist authoritarian regimes, as was his belief in the kinship of Serbs and Croats. Nevertheless, in the summer of 1957, in a letter to an acquaintance from Novi Sad, he admitted that he had regretted his unreserved support of Yugoslav nationalism in the 1930s. Time, according to his experience, had shown that the policy of Yugoslav unitarism, which he advocated at the time, was "crazy and fatal for Serbia" and that it only succeeded in infuriating "the rightists, papists and Frankists in Yugoslav skin." He reproached himself for not seeing it earlier: "And my eyes were opened too, damned eyes like old man Vujadin's!" I'd better keep quiet – because we are all guilty."<sup>54</sup>

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The change of generations in Matica Srpska took place spontaneously in the mid-1950s, despite the efforts of the revolutionary authorities to control scientific, literary and artistic creativity. In 1956, the management of Matica was entrusted to Radomir Radujkov (1913–1982), who had shown excellent results as a manager of cultural and artistic "enterprises" in Novi Sad during the previous decade. He was a native of Novi Sad artisan family. He was educated at the gymnasium in Novi Sad, and in the early 1930s he studied forestry in Zagreb, where he founded a club of students from Vojvodina, named after Mihailo Polit Desančić. He was a communist since 1938 and knew Josip Broz personally. Although he spent the war in a prison camp and did not participate in the national liberation struggle, he enjoyed great trust from the communist authorities, not only at the city but also at higher levels. When he returned to Novi Sad from captivity, he was immediately engaged in the apparatus for agitation and propaganda. He was elected as a member of the provincial party and state bodies, and distinguished himself as the president of the City People's Committee, i.e. the revolutionary mayor of Novi Sad (1951–1952). Almost all of his activities, however, bear witness to his efforts to restore and preserve the Serbian cultural tradition in Novi Sad and Vojvodina. In the early 1950s, he opposed the renaming of the Serbian National Theater to Vojvodina National Theater. On the other hand, he successfully achieved that the newspaper and publishing company *Slobodna Vojvodina*, which

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књижевног договора': од 'декларације' до 'предлога"', *Српски језик: студије српске и словенске*, 26, 1 (2021), 219–236. <https://doi.org/10.18485/sj.2021.26.1.12>

<sup>54</sup> Коста Милутиновић, „Из преписке са Вељком Петровићем”, *Зборник Матице српске за књижевност и језик*, 38, 3 (1990), 483–500.

published the newspaper of the same name, launched during the war, be named – *Dnevnik*. This happened precisely on the centennial of the founding of the newspaper *Srbski dnevnik*, which had been launched by Danilo Medaković in 1852.<sup>55</sup> Radujkov was appointed manager of the Serbian National Theater in 1954 and remained in that position until 1958. During that period, he initiated the establishment of the Yugoslav theater festival in honor of Jovan Steria Popović – *Sterijino pozorje*.<sup>56</sup>

During Radomir Radujkov's presidency, Matica Srpska was transformed into a scientific institution. Scientific departments and a manuscript department were established, as a specific institutional archive, in which the manuscript legacy of distinguished associates of this institution would be preserved. He advocated for the establishment of special awards of Matica Srpska for literary essays by university and high school students, as well as awards for original literary works, named after Serbian poets – Branko Radičević and Jovan Jovanović Zmaj. The Library and Gallery became organizationally independent, linked to Matica Srpska by official names and the procedure for electing the management.<sup>57</sup>

Radomir Radujkov's closest collaborators in Matica were Mladen Leskovac (1904–1991) and Boško Petrović (1915–2001). Mladen Leskovac was a native of Stari Sivač. Unlike the majority of writers and scientists from Novi Sad, he was not educated in the oldest Serbian high schools in Sremski Karlovci and Novi Sad. He was educated at the grammar school in Sombor, where he mastered the Hungarian language, and then studied literature in Belgrade. When he finished his studies, he returned to Sombor and began his career as a high school teacher. He wrote poetry, literary criticism, scientific contributions in the field of the history of Serbian literature of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. His works were published since the mid-1920s in *Letopis Matica Srpska* and *Srpski književni glasnik*, as well as other literary magazines. He found a job in Novi Sad very quickly, but was fired after the establishment of the Hungarian occupation in 1941. He spent the war in seclusion, refusing any cooperation with the Hungarian authorities. Although he

<sup>55</sup> The first edition of *Srbski dnevnik* was published on 21 June 1852. Василије Крестић, *Историја српске штампе у Угарској: 1791–1914*. (Нови Сад: Матица српска, 1982), 106–123, 142–155.

<sup>56</sup> М. Л. [Милена Лесковац], „Радујков, Радомир Раша”, *Енциклопедија Српског народног позоришта*. [Електронско издање] (Нови Сад: СНП, 1972–). <https://www.snp.org.rs/enciklopedija/?p=14889>.

<sup>57</sup> Миливој Николајевић, „In memoriam. Радомир-Раша Радујков (1913–1982): дугогодишњи председник Матице српске”, *Рад Матице српске*. 19 (1982), 100–103; Јелена Ковачек, „Радомир Радујков у Матици српској”, *Годишњак Библиотеке Матице српске* (1998), 172–178.

was not a communist, he enjoyed the reputation of an uncompromised intellectual and in 1945 he was appointed manager of the Matica Srpska Library. He significantly contributed to the transformation of Matica Srpska into a scientific institution when he launched *Journal of Literature and Language* in 1953.<sup>58</sup>

Boško Petrović was ten years younger than Leskovac, a Germanist, educated in the mid-1930s in Belgrade. In the spring of 1941, he was mobilized, captured and taken to Germany. He managed to return to Novi Sad from the prison camp at the end of 1941. He spent the war years organizing the library of the former Great Serbian Orthodox Gymnasium in Novi Sad. After the war, he was engaged as a journalist in *Slobodna Vojvodina*, and from 1947 as the editor-in-chief of Matica Srpska Publishing Company.<sup>59</sup> He translated numerous works that can be classified as classics of German literature. He was passionately engaged in the study of the history of Serbian literature of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>60</sup>

On the initiative of Boško Petrović, the young writer Aleksandar Tišma (1922–2003),<sup>61</sup> who had spent the war in Novi Sad and Budapest, was employed in the Matica Srpska Publishing Company in 1949. During the war, he was threatened primarily because of his Serbian-Jewish origin. During his studies in Budapest, he decided to be a writer and to write in Serbian, even though it was not the language he had the best command of. That decision was recorded in his diary in 1943 and described as “the selfish background of nationalism.” While he was deciding which language to write in, he was “absolutely indifferent to the resurrection of the Serbian, that is, the Yugoslav state.” When he decided to be a Serbian writer, he became concerned about the fate of Serbia – he wanted the people for whom he primarily writes “to be as strong and significant as possible.”<sup>62</sup>

<sup>58</sup> When the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad was founded in 1954, he was elected full professor, head of the department of literature and first dean. From 1958 to 1964, he was the editor of *Letopis Matice Srpske*. In the early 1960s, he was elected a corresponding member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, and a full member in 1970. He was elected president of Matica in 1969 and remained on that position for a decade. Радован Поповић, *Велики господин. Младен Лесковац – њим самим* (Нови Сад: Матица српска, 2017); Б. Кв. [Божидар Ковачек], „Лесковац, Младен”, *Енциклопедија Српског народног позоришта*. [Електронско издање] (Нови Сад: СНП, 1972–). <https://www.snp.org.rs/enciklopedija/?p=5608>.

<sup>59</sup> Д. Пв. [Душан Попов], „Петровић, Бошко“, *Енциклопедија Српског народног позоришта*. [Електронско издање] (Нови Сад: СНП, 1972–). <https://www.snp.org.rs/enciklopedija/?p=8654>.

<sup>60</sup> Бошко Петровић, „О Србима, о србовању, о грађанима, о прошлости и о још понечем”, *Летопис Матице српске* 381, 2 (1958): 119–134.

<sup>61</sup> Божидар Ковачек, „Тишма у Матици српској”, in: *Повратак миру Александра Тишме* (ур. Јован Делић, Светозар Кољевић, Иван Негришорац), (Нови Сад: Матица српска, Огранак САНУ у Новом Саду, 2005), 332–338.

<sup>62</sup> Aleksandar Tišma, *Dnevnik 1942–1951 (Postajanje)*, (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1991), 59.

By the end of the 1950s, Aleksandar Tišma was questioning his national identity and concluded that he did not feel “a member of a nation that was chosen, but a chosen one without a nation, beyond all nations, beyond the world divided into nations in general.”<sup>63</sup> A few decades later, he called his attitude toward national identity during and in the first years after World War II an “illusion of drowning”, which was breaking and broke of just as it would have broken anywhere else, because it was not in accordance with his nature.<sup>64</sup>

In the mid-1950s, Borislav Mihajlović Mihiz (1922–1997) was appointed manager of the Matica Srpska Library.<sup>65</sup> Only two years younger, Tišma noted in his diary that it was a matter of “reassignment as a punishment”, but that the “political exile” in Novi Sad would even be provided with an apartment.<sup>66</sup> Mihajlović was a native of Srem, from where he escaped with his family in 1941 to Serbia under German military occupation. In Belgrade, during his studies and at the beginning of his journalistic and literary career, he created a circle of reliable friends, talented and creative young people, who, more or less successfully, balanced between resistance and closeness to the communists. Nevertheless, Dobrica Ćosić (1921–2014), a writer and publicist, was also in that circle, one of the very influential party leaders. Ćosić was also one of the patrons of *Nedeljne informativne novine*, a magazine better known by its acronym – NIN. Mihiz also knew Stevan Doronjski (1919–1981), a party and provincial official, because they had been high school students in Sremski Karlovci at approximately the same time. Thanks to such connections, he was not persecuted for supporting Milovan Đilas (1911–1995), who at that time clashed with the party and state leaders, but was only “removed” in Novi Sad.<sup>67</sup>

In Novi Sad, young Mihiz composed a poetic collage for the ensemble of the Serbian National Theater under the title *Vojvodina – poetska panorama*

<sup>63</sup> Aleksandar Tišma, *Dnevnik: 1942–2001*. (Sremski Karlovci–Novi Sad: Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića, 2001), 322.

<sup>64</sup> Марко Чудић, „Хунгаролошка концепција Александра Тишме”, *Књижевна историја*, 163 (2017), 131; Јелена Ангеловски, „Прозни опус Александра Тишме” (Докторска дисертација, Универзитет у Београду, 2014).

<sup>65</sup> See: Владан Бајчета, *Борислав Михајловић Михиз: критичар и писац* (Нови Сад: Матица српска, 2021); Владан Бајчета, *Књижевно дјело Борислава Михајловића Михиза* (Докторска дисертација, Универзитет у Београду, 2015).

<sup>66</sup> Aleksandar Tišma, *Dnevnik: 1942–2001*. (Sremski Karlovci–Novi Sad: Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića, 2001), 269.

<sup>67</sup> Borislav Mihajlović Mihiz, *Autobiografija – o drugima*. Том 1–2. Beograd: Evro-Giunti, 2008, 434–435; Ranko Končar, Dimitrije Boarov, Stevan Doronjski, *Obrana autonomije Vojvodine*. (Novi Sad: Muzej Vojvodine, 2011), 46–47, 196.

*u dva dela (Vojvodina – a Poetic Panorama in Two Parts)*.. The premiere of the dramatic adaptation of verses by Serbian poets from different areas of Vojvodina, written from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was held at the end of November 1956. The poetic collage about Vojvodina received public praise on the pages of the Novi Sad newspaper *Dnevnik* and the Belgrade magazine *NIN*. The reviews pointed out that the play had evoked “wonderful emotions of rebellion and pain, cheerfulness and laughter” in the audience. At the beginning of December, the Serbian National Theater toured to Atelje 212 and was very well received.<sup>68</sup>

Mihiz’s stage anthology of Serbian poetry of Vojvodina did not, however, meet with unanimous approval, especially not among the youngest generation of Novi Sad communists. Immediately after the first performance, a very harsh criticism was published in the Novi Sad youth magazine *Polja*, under the title “Serbian Vojvodina of Borislav Mihajlović.” The critic was Aleksandar Forišković (1932–1990),<sup>69</sup> at that time a history student at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. Already in the first sentences of the extensive text, Forišković was explicit: “This is not the Vojvodina we live in and whose history we know. This is Vojvodina that lives on patron saint days (even today, in 1956), with candlesticks and troparions. Those few words from the conference, in which the People’s Revolution and the verses of Jovan Popović are mentioned, are only there to satisfy the form and please the authorities. This is not the Vojvodina of the Vojvodina Serbs. It is the Vojvodina of Greater Serbia, the big and the small of bourgeoisie bazaar.” He recommended to Borislav Mihajlović, by name and surname, poets from Vojvodina who were not Serbs, whose verses should be included in the new version of the poetic panorama of Vojvodina. Forišković also pointed to Serbian poets who wrote social and revolutionary poetry, and whom Mihajlović had unfairly omitted from his poetic collage. Forišković’s conclusion was unequivocal – “One thing is certain: that the *Poetic Panorama of Vojvodina*, as created by Borislav Mihajlović, is the **defense of Greater Serbia** from its **petty-bourgeois bastions** (emphasis added in the original, A/N B. Š. B.), and from here it’s pretty close to pure-blooded chauvinism.”<sup>70</sup> The production was not banned though. It had more than twenty performances in Novi Sad

<sup>68</sup> Бојана Поповић, „Живот и дело Борислава Михајловића Михиза” (Докторска дисертација, Универзитет у Новом Саду, Филозофски факултет, 2015), 214–216.

<sup>69</sup> Н. [Никола] Л. Гаћеша, „Александар Форишковић (1932–1990). In memoriam”, *Истраживања*, 13 (1990), 313–314.

<sup>70</sup> Aleksandar Forišković, „Srpska Vojvodina Borislava Mihajlovića”, *Polja*, 16–17 (1956), 2, 13.

in front of more than six and a half thousand spectators, and it was also played in front of audiences in Zagreb and Ljubljana.<sup>71</sup>

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After the end of the national liberation war and the communist revolution, Miloš Crnjanski remained in exile, fearing that he would be attacked by the new Yugoslav authorities, primarily because of his journalistic work in the Yugoslav kingdom.<sup>72</sup> The correspondence kept in the Manuscript Department of Matica Srpska shows that his fear was justified, because at the end of the 1950s there were those who were appalled by the possibility that Crnjanski would influence new generations of readers with his appearance and new works, that the post-war youth “returns to the period 30 years ago and is surviving what we have already survived once.”<sup>73</sup> However, there were many more who wanted the return of Miloš Crnjanski. In 1956, *Migrations* and *The Journal of Carnojevic* were published in one book in Subotica. In 1959, a translation of *Migrations* into Hungarian was published in Novi Sad. It was, in fact, a repeated edition of the translation, which had been printed in Budapest before the attack on Yugoslavia and about which Mladen Leskovac had published a review in *Srpski književni glasnik*.<sup>74</sup>

In the early 1960s, on the initiative of Mladen Leskovac, a Serbian translation of Simeon Pišćević’s memoirs was published in *Zbornik za književnost i jezik*, one hundred years after the first edition in Russian. The memoirs were published in several sequels under the title *Report on the experiences of Captain Simeon Stepanov Pišćević, Major General and Cavalier of the Order of St. George, about His Birth, Life, Upbringing, Studies, Beginning of Service, Moving to a Distant Country, about His Military Deeds and Various Experiences Brought to him by Luck and Misfortune, Written in His Own Hand and Collected from Many of his Earlier Records, Brought to 1785*.<sup>75</sup> In 1963, the Serbian Literary Cooperative

<sup>71</sup> J. M. [Јован Миросављевић], „Војводина – поетска панорама у два дела. Избор текстова Борислав Михајловић Михиз”, *Енциклопедија Српског народног позоришта*, (Нови Сад: СНП, 1972–).

<sup>72</sup> Милош Црњански, *Политички списи*, прир. Зоран Аврамовић (Београд: Сфаирос, 1989).

<sup>73</sup> С. Трећаков, В. Шовљански (прир.), *О Црњанском: архивалије*, 109–131.

<sup>74</sup> Milos Crnjanski, *Örökös vándorlás: regény*. (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1941); Milos Crnjanski, *Örökös vándorlás*. ([Novi Sad]: Forum, 1959); Младен Лесковац, „Југословенски писци на мађарском језику”, *Српски књижевни гласник*, књ. 62, св. 7 (1941), 549–553.

<sup>75</sup> Ђ. Ђурић, *op. cit.*, 53.

published Piščević's work under the title *Memoirs*, illustrated with drawings by his contemporary Zaharije Orfelin (1726–1785).<sup>76</sup> In the early 1970s, Boško Petrović published an extensive article about the memoirs of Simeon Piščević in *Letopis Matice Srpske*.<sup>77</sup> That article was the announcement of the second edition of the *Memoirs*, published in 1972, with Matica Srpska participating in its publication.<sup>78</sup>

The popularity of the autobiographical texts of the Serbs, who had settled in and out of the Pannonian Plain during the past centuries, was driven by the opportunity to re-read and reflect on more than a thousand pages of *Migrations*, the “novel of one nation.”<sup>79</sup> Namely, in the early 1960s, the Serbian Literary Cooperative published a novel by Miloš Crnjanski entitled *The Second Book of Migrations*.<sup>80</sup> Preparations for the publication of the collected works of Miloš Crnjanski began soon. In addition to Matica Srpska from Novi Sad, publishing houses from Belgrade, Zagreb and Sarajevo also joined this project (1966).<sup>81</sup>

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The communist elite in Vojvodina were looking for a new, revolutionary identity, “cleansed” of centuries-old dust and Serbian patina. The need to permanently secure the “treasures of the revolution” in Vojvodina led the Association of War Veterans of the People's Liberation War (SUBNOR) of the Socialist Republic of Serbia for Vojvodina to launch the edition of *Vojvodina in Battle* in the mid-1950s. In the edition, a series entitled *Memories* was also planned. Former partisans wrote wartime chronicles of individual settlements and military units, describing impressive experiences and characters of fellow soldiers. They were systematically encouraged to write about their personal experiences from the war and revolution. The books were printed with the financial support of the

<sup>76</sup> Симеон Пишчевић, *Мемоари* (Београд: Српска књижевна задруга, 1963).

<sup>77</sup> Бошко Петровић, „Симеон Пишчевић и његови мемоари”, *Летопис Матице српске*. књ. 407, св. 2 (1971), 123–146.

<sup>78</sup> Симеон Пишчевић, *Мемоари* (Нови Сад; Београд: Матица српска; Српска књижевна задруга, 1972).

<sup>79</sup> Зоран Глушчевић, „Роман једног национа”, *Књижевне новине*, 186, 24. децембра 1962, 3.

<sup>80</sup> Милош Црњански, *Сеобе и Друга књига Сеоба*. 1–2 (Београд: Српска књижевна задруга, 1962).

<sup>81</sup> Задужбина Милоша Црњанског / Милош Црњански / Библиографија. [https://www.mcrnjanski.rs/index.php?str=all.php&sir=sira&sub1=5&sub2=12&lang=cyr\\_](https://www.mcrnjanski.rs/index.php?str=all.php&sir=sira&sub1=5&sub2=12&lang=cyr_)

provincial, state and party authorities.<sup>82</sup> It was expected that an insight into the experiences, impressions and feelings of the participants of the national liberation war would encourage the post-war generations to reconsider the traditional concepts of national identity.

In the mass production of autobiographical sources about the war and revolution in Vojvodina, the work of one of the most influential politicians of that era, Jovan Veselinov Žarko (1906–1982), stands out.<sup>83</sup> Veselinov was born in a poor peasant family from Banat. He was introduced to socialist and communist ideas as a boy. Instead of devoting himself to farming, which his parents expected of him, he left home and learned various trades, especially metalworking, working for wages. At the age of 17, he found a job in an iron factory in Smederevo, and at the age of 20 in a textile factory in Belgrade, where, thanks primarily to the political connections of the owner, “felt for the army and gendarmerie” was made. There had been communists in his family even before him, so it seemed logical that he would engage in the struggle for the rights of the working class. After the deaths of Žarko Zrenjanin (1902–1942) and Svetozar Marković Toza (1913–1943), Veselinov was the most influential and experienced communist in Vojvodina during World War II. After the war, he was considered one of the most committed executors of party directives in Vojvodina, especially in the process of implementing agrarian reform and colonization, as well as forced purchase in agriculture and dealing with the “kulaks” in Vojvodina (1945–1952).<sup>84</sup> His autobiographical collage entitled *Svi smo mi jedna partija* (*We Are All One Party*) was published in 1971.<sup>85</sup> The title was meant to indicate that national identity was unimportant to communists, because everyone in Vojvodina, regardless of national origin, was dedicated to the general progress of the province and all its inhabitants.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the state-legal status of Vojvodina was in the focus of the public, primarily due to the changes brought about by the adoption of the new Yugoslav constitution in 1974.<sup>86</sup> This came to the fore when

<sup>82</sup> Michael Antolović, „`Only those who have shown in deed that they are in favor of socialist self-governance can engage in writing and teaching of history` – The rise and fall of `Vojvodinian historiography` (1968–1993)”, *Istorija 20. veka*, 2 (2022), 288. <https://doi.org/10.29362/ist20veka.2022.2.ant.277-300>

<sup>83</sup> Јован Веселинов Жарко, „Мој отац”. *Летопис Матице српске*, 429, 5 (1982), 936–940.

<sup>84</sup> See: Јелена Попов, *Народни фронт у Војводини (1944–1953)* (Нови Сад: Филозофски факултет, Институт за историју, 1986); Јелена Попов, *Драма на војвођанском селу (1945–1952). Обавезни откуп пољопривредних производа* (Нови Сад: Платонеум, 2002).

<sup>85</sup> Јован Веселинов Жарко, *Сви смо ми једна партија*. Нови Сад: Савез удружења бораца НОР САП Војводине, 1971.

<sup>86</sup> See: Слободан Бјелица, *Спорови око аутономије Војводине. Књига прва: 1961–1974* (Београд: Службени гласник, 2015).

the book was translated into Hungarian. The title was changed and read: *Rađanje autonomne Vojvodine: sećanja* (*The Birth of Autonomous Vojvodina: Memoires*).<sup>87</sup> The translation intervention was supposed to indicate that the book talked about the role of communists in the creation of a new concept of Vojvodina during the national liberation war and the role of Jovan Veselinov in that process. Namely, when the Communist Party of Croatia tried to extend its jurisdiction to the territory of Srem, it was he who formulated the goals of the provincial party organization in January 1943: “Our party’s position is that Vojvodina, which includes Srem, Banat, Bačka and Baranja, constitutes one whole, considering its multinational structure.” Veselinov also participated in the founding of the Provincial People’s Liberation Committee for Vojvodina (1943), as well as the Anti-Fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Serbia (ASNOS), in November 1944. In April 1945, he convened a conference of the provincial party organization at which the position was accepted that Vojvodina should be an autonomous province within Serbia, primarily because Serbs in Vojvodina formed a “relative majority.” In early of April 1945, the highest revolutionary authority in Vojvodina (the Main National Liberation Committee) declared for the annexation of Vojvodina to Serbia. That decision was accepted by ASNOS, but at the end of July 1945, in Novi Sad, the Assembly of Delegates of the Nationalities and National Minorities of Vojvodina was held in connection with this issue. In addition to Serbs, representatives of Croats, Romanians, Rusyns, Slovaks and Hungarians, as well as Jews, spoke at this meeting. Together, in a patriotic and revolutionary atmosphere, they made the decision to “unify” the autonomous province of Vojvodina with the federal Serbia”.<sup>88</sup>

Based on the autobiographical template created by Jovan Veselinov, it was possible to proceed with the artistic shaping and popularization of a hybrid (supra)national identity, which stemmed from the heterogeneous national composition of the population, revolutionary tradition, spatial, economic and cultural specificities of Vojvodina, with full respect for the fact that Vojvodina was the result of the struggle of the Serbs for unification with their country proper. It was expected that this would encourage a more dynamic development of the sense of belonging to a uniquely colorful community of different nations in Vojvodina. The renowned and internationally recognized composer Rudolf Bruči (1917–

<sup>87</sup> Jovan Veselinov Žarko, *Az autonóm Vajdaság születése: emlékezések* (Újvidék: Forum, 1975, 1983<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>88</sup> Јелена Попов, „Активност покрајинског руководства НОР-а и револуције у Војводини на реализовању идеје о аутономији (1941–1945)”, *Истраживања*, 13 (1990), 193–212.

2002), associate of the Serbian National Theater and director of the High School of Music in Novi Sad, was hired for the artistic interpretation of the Jovan Veselinov's autobiographical work.<sup>89</sup> In October 1979, the Novi Sad audience was presented an oratorio for reciters, soloists, mixed choir and symphony orchestra, entitled *We Are All One Party*. The piece was performed 30 times in front of almost 12,000 spectators.<sup>90</sup> The slogan "We are all one party!" gained new importance after the death of Josip Broz Tito (1980). Based on the memories of Jovan Veselinov Žarko, a TV series was created under the title *Base on the Danube*, broadcast in 1981 on Radio-Television Novi Sad.<sup>91</sup> It seemed justified to publish a second edition, both the original version in Serbian, that is, the Serbo-Croatian language (1980), and the Hungarian translation (1983). By the mid-1980s, the book was also translated into Romanian.<sup>92</sup>

Despite intensive promotion, the autobiographical work of Jovan Veselinov Žarko slowly fell into the shadow of the conflict between the leading figures in the party and state structures in Vojvodina and Serbia. Disputes began in the late 1960s. Although there was a belief that they would be resolved with the adoption of the last Yugoslav Constitution (1974), the complete opposite happened. The most important constitutional provisions left room for different interpretations of the constitutional provisions on the status of republics in Yugoslavia, and in Serbia the question of the balance of power between the republic and the autonomous provinces within it was opened.

At that time, the leading "ideologist" of the Vojvodina political elite was Dušan Popović (1921–2016), originally from a distinguished family from Novi Sad, the son of the former first ban of the Danube Banovina, later senator, construction engineer and architect Daka Popović (1886–1967). He started his education in Sremski Karlovci, but as the son of a senator and a member of the highest social class in the Yugoslav kingdom, he finished his education at an elite Belgrade high school. On the eve of World War II, he began studying civil engineering. At that time, he became close to the influential Yugoslav communists, which was of crucial importance in his further life. After the war, he trained in the party's

<sup>89</sup> Немања Совтић, *Несврстани хуманизам Рудолфа Бручија: композитор и друштво самоуправног социјализма*, (Докторска дисертација, Универзитет у Београду), 2016.

<sup>90</sup> Ј. М. [Јован Миросављевић], „Сви смо ми једна партија”, *Енциклопедија Српског народног позоришта*. [Електронско издање] (Нови Сад: СНП, 1972–).

<sup>91</sup> Josip Babel, „Koreni revolucije: povodom igrane serije 'Baza na Dunavu' TV Novi Sad, snimljene po knjizi memoara 'Svi smo mi jedna partija' Jovana Veselinova Žarka”, *Dometi*, 26 (1981), 97–102.

<sup>92</sup> Jovan Veselinov Žarko, *Un partid sintem cu toții* (Panciova: Libertatea, 1985).

political school and was immediately involved in the party's apparatus for agitation and propaganda. The degree of his loyalty to the party and the revolution is perhaps best evidenced by the fact that he was entrusted to publish one of the first condemnations of Branko Ćopić's "Heretical Story" in *Književne novine* in 1950.<sup>93</sup>

Dušan Popović actively and with great enthusiasm participated in the "disputes about the autonomy of Vojvodina", and after the adoption of the 1974 Constitution, he put a lot of effort into proving both theoretically and practically that Vojvodina had met all the conditions for independent development, independent from Serbia. He acted as the head of the Socialist Union of the Working People of Vojvodina, an organization that symbolized "political pluralism" in the one-party system. One of his ideas was to establish a special academy of sciences and arts in Vojvodina. It was to be expected that such an idea would not be met with enthusiasm in Matica Srpska, but it was not approved by many of Popović's party comrades either. He also planned a capital project for future academics from Vojvodina – *The Encyclopedia of Vojvodina*. He put himself at the head of the editorial board.<sup>94</sup>

In the early 1960s, Aleksandar Tišma wrote in his diary that he considered the idea of members of different national communities to adopt the Vojvodina identity as a common one unachievable. In his opinion, any emphasis on Vojvodina's distinctiveness among Serbs would primarily encourage traditional Serbian nationalism, "since for them Vojvodina is a symbol of national conservation." On the other hand, renouncing the Vojvodina identity would not motivate the Serbs to move "across the border, into irredentism." It seemed to him that the communist elite did not see how dangerous it was to impose this concept on the Hungarians in Vojvodina. In the early 1970s, however, he wrote in his diary: "Serbianness – to which I belong by name – is experiencing the defeat of its historical and psychological mission: to be the unifier of the southern Slavs." The will for the independence of the other nations drives it to retreat to its own borders, even to the narrowest borders, which are not the borders of Serbianness, but Serbia,

<sup>93</sup> Dušan Popović „Klevetnička satira”, *Književne novine. Organ Saveza književnika Jugoslavije*, 24. oktobar 1950, 2–3.

<sup>94</sup> Slobodan Bjelica noticed that Dušan Popović, in explaining the historical foundations of the Vojvodina Academy of Sciences and Arts (VANU), "did not refer to the traditions of NOR and the labor movement, but to the Karlovac Circle of Metropolitan Stefan Stratimirović, the Timisoara Serbian Literary Society of Dimitrije Tirol, the Language Society of Lukijan Mušicki, Matica Srpska and Serbian Literature Society, as well as some Hungarian scientific associations from the 19<sup>th</sup> century". Слободан Бјелица, *Спорови око аутономије Војводине. Књига друга: 1974–1988*. (Београд: Службени гласник, 2021), 84–88.

where only 60% of the nation lives.” Sensing that the “language conflicts” in Yugoslavia were a sign of a complete schism between Croats and Serbs, Tišma wrote in his diary that it was good that in the population census, carried out in early 1971, he could declare himself as “nationally undetermined.” This gave him “great relief, even satisfaction.” He could live in accordance with the principles that had guided him through the dark age of World War II: “do not interfere, just listen and do not speak, because you are not what they think you are (Serb or Jew, whatever), but you must not say it openly: there are shots.” He considered that such behavior corresponded to his nature and character and that he would maintain the same position “in any country as soon as a crisis situation arises: in America regarding Vietnam or blacks, in France regarding anti-Americanism, etc.” In 1976, he received the prestigious NIN Award for the novel *The Use of Man*. However, in 1979, he did not refuse Dušan Popović’s offer to be elected as one of the first 15 academicians of VANU.<sup>95</sup>

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In 1979, Matica Srpska published a new, Latin edition of Mihajlo Pupin’s autobiography.<sup>96</sup> Ten years later, Pupin’s work was published as the fourteenth book in the edition entitled *Srpska književnost: Memoari, dnevnic, autobiografije* (*Serbian Literature: Memoirs, Diaries, Autobiographies*) by Nolit publishing house from Belgrade.<sup>97</sup> Autobiographical works from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, mostly written by Serbs from the Habsburg Monarchy, were also published in this edition. In addition to Pupin’s, the autobiography of Milutin Milanković (1879–1958), another internationally recognized Serbian scientist, was also published.<sup>98</sup> It was, in fact, the second edition of Milanković’s autobiography, because the work entitled *Uspomene, doživljaji, saznanja* (*Memories, Experiences, Knowledge*), was first printed as an edition of the Department of Natural and Mathematical Sciences of the Serbian Academy of Sciences. The first two volumes were printed while Milanković was still alive (1952, 1957). The third volume, in

<sup>95</sup> Aleksandar Tišma, *Dnevnik: 1942–2001* (Sremski Karlovci–Novi Sad: Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića, 2001), 412, 535, 620, 669.

<sup>96</sup> Mihajlo Pupin, *Sa pašnjaka do naučenjaka* (Beograd; Novi Sad: Narodna knjiga; Matica srpska, 1979).

<sup>97</sup> Михајло Пупин, *Са пањњака до научењака* [Српска књижевност. Мемоари, дневници, аутобиографије 18]. (Београд: Нолит, 1989).

<sup>98</sup> Милутин Миланковић, *Успомене, доживљаји, сазнања*. 1–2 [Српска књижевност. Мемоари, дневници, аутобиографије 19]. (Београд: Нолит, 1989).

which Milanković writes about his earliest childhood and youth, was published on the centenary of his birth (1979).<sup>99</sup>

Milutin Milanković was about twenty years younger than Pupin, a native of Dalj, a small town near the confluence of the Drava and the Danube, which is today in Osijek-Baranja County in the Republic of Croatia. He began his biography by describing his ancestors, who, like Pupin, he imagined in the procession of the most distinguished Serbian families who, led by patriarch Arsenije Čarnojević, had moved to the northern bank of the Danube and the Sava at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Milanković's ancestors were not fearless and loyal border guards in the service of the Habsburg emperors and empresses, but skilled merchants who tried to "elevate" themselves in accordance with the social norms of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the country they moved to as refugees. Milutin Milanković's great-grandfather, a certain Milanko, settled in the Dalj region, not as a soldier and border guard and "not to cultivate the land, but to trade horses and cattle." The aspiration for social success, combined with innate talents and work discipline, enabled the members of this family to achieve "the rank of intellectuals and university graduates already with their third generation" in the Habsburg Monarchy. Milanković, like Pupin, remembered family gatherings, which were crucial in preserving the stories of origin and national identity. In Milanković's family, however, the custom has developed that "nothing from family documents and memories is taken away." Milanković's houses were "a kind of family museums", where documents were kept (excerpts from registers of baptisms, marriage certificates, school certificates, notes, letters, etc.), but also framed portraits of ancestors, including their wives, painted by hands of educated painters.<sup>100</sup>

Nolit's edition *Serbian literature: Memoari, Diaries, Autobiographies* also included autobiographical works of participants in the national liberation struggle, but it could also be considered a kind of announcement of great jubilees in the history of the Serbs. Six centuries passed from the Battle of Kosovo to 1989. Three centuries passed from the Great Migration, in which both Pupin's and Milanković's ancestors had participated, until 1990. The autobiographical works

<sup>99</sup> Милутин Миланковић, *Успомене, доживљаји и сазнања из година 1909. до 1944.* (Београд: САН, Одељење математичких наука, 1952); Милутин Миланковић, *Успомене, доживљаји и сазнања: после 1944.* (Београд: САН, Одељење природно-математичких наука, 1957); Милутин Миланковић, *Успомене, доживљаји и сазнања – детињство и младост 1879–1909,* (Београд: САНУ: Одељење природно-математичких наука, 1979).

<sup>100</sup> Милутин Миланковић, *Успомене, доживљаји, сазнања. Прва књига* (Београд: Нолит, 1989), 28–33.

of two world-renowned scientists testified to their understanding of national identity as a golden thread connecting them to their ancestors. That pattern was widely accepted among Serbs during the commemoration of the major anniversaries of the Battle of Kosovo and the Great Migration.

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The need to speak publicly about the individual experiences of Serbs during the 20<sup>th</sup> century encouraged authors from the generation born in the Yugoslav state to look back on their own and the past of the state they lived in, which was disintegrating before their eyes. National identity is an extremely important topic in the autobiographical work of the 20<sup>th</sup> century writers, who had been formed in the authoritarian Yugoslav monarchy, survived the Second World War, and then lived and created in the authoritarian Yugoslav federation. Already in the 1980s, the autobiographical notes of Borislav Mihajlović Mihiz and the diary entries of Aleksandar Tišma were published, first fragmentarily, in literary magazines, and then as separate editions.

Mihiz's work entitled *Autobiografija – o drugima* (*Autobiography – About Others*) was published in 1990. The book was extremely popular, so two more editions were printed. The circulation exceeded 10,000 copies in three years.<sup>101</sup> Mihiz died in 1997 and was unable to complete the planned third volume of his autobiography. Although unfinished, the supplemented *Autobiography – About Others* saw new editions in 2003 and 2008.<sup>102</sup>

In 1991, Matica Srpska published Aleksandar Tišma's diary entries from 1942 to 1951.<sup>103</sup> Ten years later, an integral, voluminous version of Tišma's diary, kept from 1942 to 2001, was published.<sup>104</sup> An authentic ("condensed") edition of his memories, under the title *Sečaj se večkrat na Vali*, was published in 2012.<sup>105</sup> Tišma's *Diary* saw a third edition in 2018, this time as a three-volume book.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Борислав Михајловић Михиз, *Аутобиографија – о другима* (Београд: Београдски издавачко-графички завод, 1990).

<sup>102</sup> Borislav Mihajlović Mihiz, *Autobiografija o drugima*, 1–2 (Novi Sad: Solaris; 2003).

<sup>103</sup> Aleksandar Tišma, *Dnevnik 1942–1951 (Postajanje)*, (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1991).

<sup>104</sup> The book is divided into four chronological sections: "Becoming", "Remaining", "Striving" and "Stopping". The author also wrote a special preface, added explanations and a list of omitted notes. Aleksandar Tišma, *Dnevnik: 1942–2001*. (Sremski Karlovci–Novi Sad: Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića, 2001), 322, 412, 535.

<sup>105</sup> Aleksandar Tišma, *Sečaj se večkrat na Vali* (Novi Sad: Akademska knjiga, 2012).

<sup>106</sup> Aleksandar Tišma, *Dnevnik: 1942–2001*. 1–3 (Novi Sad: Akademska knjiga, 2018).

One of the advocates of the autonomy of Vojvodina and Vojvodina identity, Dušan Popović, also showed the ability to create a voluminous autobiographical work. Popović's autobiography was published in 2006 under the title *Letopis o Vlaovićima (The Chronicle of the Vlaoviés)*.<sup>107</sup> The book has three volumes and about 2500 pages. This work is unusual because the author wrote about himself and individual members of his family as real literary heroes with invented or borrowed surnames. The family from the title of Popović's voluminous book bears the surname of the family described in one of Isidora Sekulić's short stories from her perhaps most famous collection, *Kronika palanačkog groblja (The Chronicle of a Provincial Cemetery)*.<sup>108</sup> The stories from *The Chronicle* encouraged contemporaries to declare Isidora Sekulić the "spiritual heiress" of Jakov Ignjatović, the progenitor of the "social novel from Vojvodina",<sup>109</sup> and the story entitled "Vlaovići" is considered one of her "most authentic family chronicles."<sup>110</sup> In his autobiographical work, Dušan Popović also integrated related texts of individual relatives, significant for the history of Vojvodina. It is obvious that he wanted to create a work that would be read as a "saga of Vojvodina", as the book was described in one of the rare (if not the only) presentations published in an informative and political weekly.<sup>111</sup>

U In addition to the above examples, it must be noted that one of the most significant authors of autobiographical literature at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the art historian Dejan Medaković, who published a book of memories of childhood and youth in 1990 under the title *Efemeris – Hronika jedne porodice (Ephemeris - Chronicle of a Family)*. That work attracted the attention of historians, but also the widest audience, primarily because of the role of his ancestors in the history of the Serbs. During the following few years, Medaković published four more volumes of his autobiographical records.<sup>112</sup> He passed away in 2008, and his memories were continuously reprinted in new formats and with different

<sup>107</sup> Dušan Popović, *Letopis o Vlaovićima, I-III* (Novi Sad: Agencija MiR, 2006).

<sup>108</sup> Исидора Секулић, *Кроника паланачког гробља*, (Београд: Српска књижевна задруга, 1940).

<sup>109</sup> Љубица Марковић, „Исидора Секулић: Кроника паланачког гробља, Београд, 1940”, *Летопис Матице српске*, књ. 354, св. 1–2 (1940), 164–166.

<sup>110</sup> In the English-language magazine published by *Matica srpska*, a translation of this very story was published: Isidora Sekulić, "The Vlaoviés", *Literary Links of Matica srpska*, 6–7 (2020), 5–20.

Radovan Vučković, "The European Context of a 'Chronicle of a Provincial Cemetery'", *Literary Links of Matica Srpska*, 6-7, (2020), 74–93.

<sup>111</sup> Dimitrije Boarov, „Politička saga o Vojvodini”, *Vreme*, 7. decembar 2006.

<sup>112</sup> Дејан Медаковић, *Ефемерис. Ефemeris I–V. Хроника једне породице* (Београд: БИГЗ, 1990–1994).

equipment. On the eve of the centennial of his birth, eight volumes of Medaković's diary entries were published, on more than 4,000 pages.<sup>113</sup> The last, two-volume edition of Medaković's memoirs, published in Novi Sad in 2022, has five volumes and approximately 1,200 pages.<sup>114</sup>

Other numerous editions of manuscripts, both those kept in the archives of the Matica Srpska and SANU, and from the private archive collections of the author's descendants, can be considered an indicator of the interest of researchers in autobiographical historical sources, especially literary historians and linguists. Historians of Serbian literature find valuable information in the preserved correspondence of writers. In 2001, the City Library in Novi Sad launched the edition *Novosadski manuskript (Novi Sad Manuscript)*, in which dozens of books with authentic testimonies about the experiences of Serbs in Novi Sad and Vojvodina during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were published over the course of two decades.

The second edition of Simeon Piščević's memoirs was published at the very end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>115</sup> In 2018, *The History of the Serbian People*, which Simeon Piščević had written in Russia, as well as his memoirs, in the Slovenized Russian language, were translated into Serbian.<sup>116</sup> The same year was marked the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Miloš Crnjanski, whose influence on the concept of Serbian national identity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is also emphasized by foreign researchers.<sup>117</sup> In Serbia, however, his political affiliations are still being questioned. It is still not understood that Crnjanski's life and literary creation were guided by the belief that the nation was "the community in which we were born and whose language we speak, something that exists above and beyond any ideology."<sup>118</sup> But,

<sup>113</sup> Дејан Медаковић, *Дани, сећања*, (Нови Сад: Прометеј; Архив Војводине; 2021).

<sup>114</sup> Дејан Медаковић, *Ефемерис: Хроника једне породице, I–V* (Нови Сад: Прометеј, 2022).

<sup>115</sup> Симеон Пишчевић, *Живот генералмајора и каваљера Симеона сина Стефана Пишчевића*. 2. изд. (Нови Сад: Матица српска, 1998).

<sup>116</sup> Симеон Пишчевић, *Историја српског народа* (прир. Ђорђе Ђурић), (Нови Сад – Шид: Академска књига, Народна библиотека Симеон Пишчевић, 2018).

<sup>117</sup> Jens Helrth, „Der Chronotopos der Nation in Miloš Crnjanskis Romanprojekt 'Seobe'”, in: Michael Müller (Hrsg.) *Serbien – Identitätskrise als Kontinuum. Äußere und innere Wandlungen in Literatur, Sprache und Geschichte* (Köln: Kirsch-Verlag, 2010), 237.

<sup>118</sup> Горана Раичевић, „Ангажовани Црњански? Писац између књижевности и политике”, in: Миро Вуксановић (ур.), *Дело Милоша Црњанског*, (Нови Сад: Огранак САНУ у Новом Саду, 2018), 30–31; Горана Раичевић, *Есеји Милоша Црњанског*, (Сремски Карловци; Нови Сад: Издавачка књижарница Зорана Стојановића, 2005); Горана Раичевић, *Агон и меланхолија. Живот и дело Милоша Црњанског*, (Нови Сад: Академска књига, 2021).

at the very end of *Migrations*, he wrote: “Who could predict what kind of nations will migrate and where, in a hundred years, as that nation has migrated? Who could count the grains that, next spring, will sprout in the world, in Europe, Asia, America, Africa?”<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Милош Црњански, *Сеобе*, III (Београд: Нолит, 1978), 483.