

MILENKO KARANOVICH

CAUSES OF SERBIAN IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

Men's history is a story of movement, of the conquest of land from nature and from fellow man, of adaptation to new environments, of the blending of blood and the intermixture of cultures, of a constant, restless striving for "something better".

FRANKLIN D. SCOTT

1

To leave one's homeland and to seek a better life outside its borders is courageous and risky. The risk is much greater when one is illiterate or semi-literate, without any skills or experience in dealing with people of various backgrounds and nationalities, and if one has never before left the place of his birth. A large number of South Slavs, particularly the Croats, Slovenes, and Serbs, were forced to take that risk. Most often they went to the United States, a country which needed manpower and was the land of opportunity.

It is not known for certain when the first Serb reached the United States. Available sources allow us only to speculate. One of the speculations is that among Dalmatian sailors, who reached the United States in the second half of the eighteenth century, there was a certain number of Serbs. This is quite possible because Dalmatian Croats and Serbs have lived and worked together.

As far as is known, George Fisher (Djordje Šagić) was the first Serb who emigrated to the United States. This was in September of 1815. He was born in 1795 in ancient Székesféhervár (Stuhlweissenburg or Stolni Beograd) in Hungary, educated at the gymnasium in Sremski Karlovci, and as a boy of 17 took part in the First Serbian Insurrection against the Turks under Karadjordje's leadership. After the Serbian defeat in 1813 he traveled for some two years on foot, going as far as Adrianople and then back, westward, across Albania, along the shore of the Adriatic Sea, crossing into Germany through Austria. As a peddler he made his way through Germany to Hamburg, where he embarked for the United State. Fisher's real name was Djordje Šagić. He changed it to George Fisher shortly after his arrival in the United States. The story goes that he came as a redemptioner but, upon his arrival in Philadelphia, he tried to escape. He was caught and held on the ship for several months

before he escaped with two companions in the ship's boat. They were almost captured. A remark by a bystander, "They are only fishers!" saved them. Since the word "fisher" made it possible for them to begin their new life as free men, all three adopted the name "Fisher"¹.

Documents regarding the emigration of Serbs from today's Yugoslav territories to the United States are too fragmentary to establish an exact number of emigrants prior to the middle of the nineteenth century. Even an intelligent estimate cannot be made. Yet it is worth mentioning one and probably the only statistical datum from that period. According to a Dalmatian immigrant who returned to his native Šibenik in 1847, there were in the 1840's in the United States "more than two thousand Serbs", mostly from the Bay of Kotor². This number ought to be taken with a certain degree of reservation because it was only an estimate established by one Serbian emigrant on the basis of his personal observation.

In the beginning of Serbian emigration to the United States the Serbs knew next to nothing about that country. Usually various stories circulated among people who added something of their own. However, in time, due to occasional articles published in the Serbian newspapers, the picture of the New World became more realistic. Most often the press published personal letters of some Serbian individuals who spent several years in the United States and who wanted to share their experience with others³. The first article about the United States intended for the Serbs was published as early as August, 1838. The author was Jovan Subotić, later a distinguished figure in Serbian cultural life. It was entitled "The Free American States" and contained much vital information about that country. As far as is known, it was the first survey of the United States which appeared in the press of the South Slavs⁴.

The earliest Serbian emigration to the United States was not large. People usually emigrated alone or with their families. No source indicates a mass emigration of Serbs. However, in the 1880's, and especially at the turn of the century, the picture was entirely different. Mass emigration of Serbs as well as of other South Slavs took such alarming proportions that their governments were forced to intervene. What prompted Serbs to leave their homes and

1. Nikola R. Pribić, "George Šagić-Fisher: Patriot of the Two Worlds", Florida State University, *Slavic Papers*, No. 1 (Tallahassee: Florida State University, 1967), pp. 35-36.

2. S. Popović, "Srbi ji u Americi", *Podunavka*, No. 10 (Belgrade), March 5 1948, p. 37. S. Popović was an emigrant from Dalmatia who returned to his native Šibenik in 1847 from the United State. It is not known how long he was there.

3. *Serbski narodni list* (Budapest), No. 18, May 24 1838; and No. 41, October 12 1844.

4. *Ibid.*, No. 34, August 27 1838, pp. 272-274.

to go to the United States? The question is complex because, before 1918, the Serbs lived under various conditions, in different states, and under different governments — Serbian, Montenegrin, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman. The best way to answer that question is to divide the major causes of emigration into two groups: economic and socio-political.

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The economic conditions of the Serbs who lived within the framework of the Austro-Hungarian Empire were similar and in some cases completely identical with the conditions of other South Slavs who were under Austro-Hungarian rule. Those differences which did exist were basically the result of historical development and natural conditions.

A large number of Serbs lived in Croatia and Slavonia and shared the difficulties of life with the Croats. At the turn of the century these Serbs numbered 610,908 or 25.5% of the total population⁵. Most of them were peasants or hired agricultural workers. Since the Austro-Hungarian government did almost nothing to improve cultivation of the land and to adjust agriculture to numerous changes introduced by the penetration of capitalism, the hardship of peasant life was especially acute by the end of the nineteenth century. The *zadruga* or extended family group, which was the nucleus of Croato-Slavonian peasant society, began to disintegrate and gradually died out⁶. The consequences were negative and in some cases disastrous. Jointly held land was divided into small plots which could not provide enough food for families. For instance, in 1895 in Croatia and Slavonia 13.23% of all small farms had one acre or less of land, and 30.99% from 1 to 5 acres⁷. Despite the fact that these small farms made up almost one half of all agricultural land, they took up only 8.47% of the total land surface, most of the rest being

5. Josip Lakatoš, *Narodna statistika* (Zagreb, 1914), p. 12.

6. In a *zadruga* several families lived together, sometimes under the same roof. Their entire property was jointly held. They worked together and shared the fruits of their work. Such a way of life had its advantages as well as disadvantages. The chief advantages were: usage of the same tools for tilling of the land; *zadruga* members usually included a few artisans who could fulfill most of its needs; and the *zadruga* was jointly responsible, as a unit, to pay its taxes. The major disadvantage was that the joint ownership lessened the ambition of a *zadruga* member, and this affected negatively its entire process of production.

7. Jaroslav Šidak and Others, *Povijest hrvatskog naroda g. 1860-1914* (Zagreb, 1968), p. 203.

in the hands of a comparatively few big landowners⁸. It is sufficient to mention that only 0.05% of all estates which they owned covered as much as 22.48% of all available land. Such estates typically covered 1,000 acres or more⁹. As far as land was concerned, the districts of Lika and Krbava in Croatia were in an unenviable position. In 1900 they had a population of 208,000, but only 225,780 acres of arable land¹⁰. In addition to the small plots of land, any newly established household had to cope with other numerous problems such as high taxes, lack of tools, lack of money, dilapidated houses — just to mention a few.

In order to keep their households together, poor peasants were forced to borrow money, and for a great number of them this was the first step toward the end of their ownership. The interest rates were so high that many peasants were not able to pay their debts, particularly if the harvest was poor. It was not rare for peasants to pay interest rates as high as 30 to 40 per cent¹¹. Such high interest rates did not destroy only small households but large ones as well.

Impoverished peasants worked as the hired hands of prosperous ones or went to towns hoping to find any job. Since industry was undeveloped, only a small number found employment. Those who did were paid so poorly that it was impossible for most to make both ends meet. In 1906 their average earnings were 100 to 200 *fillers* per day, and with that money they could not satisfy their most important daily needs¹². For instance, in 1905 in Zagreb, 1 kilogram (2.2 lbs.) of white bread cost 30 *fillers*, 1 kilogram of potatoes 12.5 *fillers*, 1 kilogram of beef between 128 and 240 *fillers*, and 1 kilogram of lard 162 *fillers*¹³. The wages of farm workers were still lower. According to a U.S. Immigration Commission report of 1911, average daily wages for farm workers in Croatia and Slavonia were from \$.35 to \$.48 during the summer and from \$.24 to \$.33 during the winter months¹⁴. Due to such low wages, poverty, penetration of capitalist production and with it economic uncertainty, the percentages of peasants gradually decreased. Until the end of the nineteenth

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*

10. Branko Čolaković, "Causes of Yugoslav Immigration to America and Quantitative Analysis of the Immigrants for Sampling Procedure", Manuscript, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota, 1969, p. 8.

11. Nikola Vučo, *Privredna istorija naroda FNRJ do I svetskog rata* (Belgrade, 1848), p. 294.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 309.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Quoted by Čolaković, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

century their decrease was insignificant: In 1890 the percentage of people engaged in agriculture was 84.63, and by 1900 it dropped to 84.29 per cent¹⁵. The so-called "flight from the village" started in the beginning of the twentieth century, and by 1910 the percentage of people engaged in agricultural production was down to 78.36¹⁶.

Economic conditions in Dalmatia were somewhat different, but not better. Due to the lack of arable land, attention was paid mainly to wine growing, seafaring, fishing, and the growing of olive trees. Its landholding relations were based on the so-called *colonnate* system, which survived until the end of the First World War. This system originated in the Roman Empire and was widespread in almost all areas surrounding the Mediterranean. It was similar to the feudal system. The essential difference was that the *colonte* was a private legal institution. In addition, the *colonnate* could be cancelled and its duration and size could vary, whereas a serf could not cancel and had to stay in that status.

Holdings under the *colonnate* system were most frequently rather small, and sometimes their owners were just as poor as their tenants. In the southern part of Dalmatia there were quite a few large *colonnate* holdings, and they were usually owned by Italian citizens. According to the census of 1910, in southern Dalmatia some 60% of the village population were *coloni*. In central and northern Dalmatia this percentage was much smaller and varied between 6 and 9 per cent¹⁷.

The peasant *colonus* tried to gradually buy the land which he tilled until he could own it. Because of a scarcity of public financial institutions, the *coloni* were forced to borrow money from wealthier townsmen and prosperous landowners. In this way the peasants became the prey of high interest rates and were caught in the net of commercial and usurious capital.

Phylloxera, plant lice which bring disease to grapevines, damaged the Dalmatian economy most, and the consequences of this plague were felt for a long time. A large number of people were so impoverished that they had to leave their homes and search for earnings outside their country. Phylloxera first appeared in the French province of the Gironde in 1868, and in three years it spread throughout France. France was forced to import wine, and a large market was opened to Dalmatian winegrowers. Encouraged by this opportunity, Dalmatia expanded cultivation of grapevines at the expense of

15. Šidak, *op. cit.*, p. 321.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Bogdan Stojšavljević, *Seljaštvo Jugoslavije, 1918-1941* (Zagreb, 1952), p. 18.

agriculture and olive groves. At first this course of action seemed to produce the desired results. Meanwhile Phylloxera spread over Hungary and created a new market for Dalmatian wine. Since Hungary was close to Dalmatia, Dalmatia oriented its wine export to this market. Business was booming until the end of 1891. Then, on December 31, Austria's Parliament passed the so-called "Wine Clause" which gave Italy great privileges regarding the export of its wine to all the lands of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This measure was disastrous for Dalmatia. The price of Dalmatian wine dropped drastically, from 20 to 30 *florins* per hectoliter (26.42 gallons) to between 5.6 and 12 *florins*¹⁸. Dalmatia could not compete for long and was forced to withdraw gradually from the Austro-Hungarian market.

On top of this, in 1894 Phylloxera invaded Dalmatia itself and completely destroyed a large part of its vineyards. The islands were hardest hit¹⁹. These calamitous events shook the Dalmatian economy from the bottom inasmuch as, for the majority of its people, winegrowing was the chief source of income. The planting of new grapevines was the only solution for most of them. To accomplish this, almost every household tried to send at least one of its members to the United States to earn some money and to make the restoration of its vineyards possible. Many men thus left to help their families.

As in Croatia and Slavonia, peasants' farms in Dalmatia were very small. Most consisted of only around 2 hectares (almost 5 acres) of arable land, largely of poor quality²⁰. These plots were inadequate for average families, and their members were forced to find additional earnings to supplement the income of their households. Because of the lack of industry, it was difficult to find employment. Those jobs which existed paid poorly. According to the U.S. Immigration Commission, daily wages in winter were about \$.20 and in summer about \$.30²¹.

Bosnia and Hercegovina, which had been a part of the Ottoman Empire for several centuries, were occupied by Austria-Hungary in 1878. The Congress of Berlin approved this occupation in the hope that Austria-Hungary would lessen tensions in those provinces, improve their administration, and, particularly, solve their urgent agrarian problem. Unfortunately, little was done to improve the situation, and, as a result, the tensions remained. The chief pre-occupation of the new master was to exploit his victim.

18. Bogdan Stojšavljević, *Povijest sela — Hrvatska, Slavonija, Dalmacija, 1848-1918* (Zagreb, 1973), pp. 352-353.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 353.

20. Šidak, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

21. Quoted by Čolaković, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

Before the First World War Bosnia and Hercegovina had a semi-feudal system based on *chifliks* (privately owned estates) and *timars*, estates whose income supported Ottoman feudal lords in exchange for their military or other service to the sultan²². The *chifliks* were of three basic types. One type was cultivated by the owner, who was known in Turkish as the *chiflik-sahibi* or *aga*, with the help of hired laborers. The second type consisted of *chifliks* cultivated by peasant serfs who were obliged to give half of the income from the land to the *aga*. In such instances, besides providing the rented land, the *aga* also furnished the oxen, a house and farm buildings. The third type were *chifliks* where the land and buildings belonged to the *aga* while the farm implements and the oxen belonged to the peasants. In such a type the serfs were obliged to give one-third or one-fourth of the income, depending on the quality of the land²³.

The feudal system, somewhat modified, continued to exist in Bosnia and Hercegovina under Austro-Hungarian rule inasmuch as the new rulers needed the landowners' support. Thanks to an Ottoman law of 1876 which permitted the serfs to free themselves of servile relationships by paying a certain amount of money to the landlords, the number of free peasants gradually grew. The pace of buying freedom was slow so that by 1918, when Bosnia and Hercegovina became a part of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later called Yugoslavia), there were still some 100,000 families or about 52% of all peasant families which had either full or partial servile status²⁴.

To buy freedom was one of the Chief reasons so many Bosnians and Hercegovinians went to the United States. When a serf had a chance to buy the *chiflik* on which he worked with his family, he usually borrowed the needed amount of money from Dalmatian merchants and bought his freedom. Now, as a free peasant, he sent his son or went himself to the United States with the aim of earning money and repaying his debts²⁵. The emigration of

22. This *timar-spahi* system of land tenure was common in the Ottoman Empire. It was based on land estates known as *timars* and, the larger ones, *ziamets* which the sultan gave to his feudal lords (*spahis*) for their deeds in wars and in the service of the state. The *spahis* had the right to collect a part of the income from these estates, for which they were obliged to go to war at the sultan's behest. The real ownership of such estates remained in the hands of the sultan himself.

23. Avdo Sućeska, "O nastanku čifluka u našim zemljama", *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Bosne i Hercegovine*, XVI (Sarajevo, 1965), pp. 37-57.

24. Nedim Šarac, "Socialdemokratska stranka Bosne i Hercegovine i agrarno pitanje", *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Bosne i Hercegovine*, XI (Sarajevo, 1961), pp. 58-62.

25. Hamdija Kapidžić, "Ekonomska emigracija iz Bosne i Hercegovine u Sjevernu Ame-

the Moslem population to Turkey after the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Hercegovina undoubtedly contributed a great deal to Serbian emigration as well. It is estimated that in the period from 1878 to 1914 around 140,000 Moslems left Bosnia and Hercegovina²⁶. Before their departure most of them sold their estates, sometimes relatively cheaply, and thereby created an opportunity for many Serbs, who constituted a majority among the serfs, to buy their estates and to achieve the status of free peasants. In most cases this status brought the new owners only psychological satisfaction. Their economic condition was not improved, but worsened.

There were numerous reasons for this. Small estates, primitive cultivation of land, high taxes, high interest rates, and debts can be singled out as the most important. About 77% of free peasants' estates were smaller than 3 hectares (7.4 acres)²⁷. The Austro-Hungarian administration retained the Turkish tax system almost unchanged, except to increase old taxes and to add new ones. For instance, in 1887 the annual taxes for all of Bosnia and Hercegovina amounted to 7,747,081 crowns, while by 1904 that sum was more than doubled, amounting to 17,095,000 crowns²⁸. High taxes, high interest rates, which sometimes were as high as 52% per year, and the rigorousness of the tax collectors made the lives of the majority of free peasants unbearable²⁹. It is sufficient to mention that in 1910 alone more than 13,500 peasants and serfs were expelled from their estates because they had not paid their taxes to the state or because the serfs had not paid one-third of their annual income to their landlords³⁰. Besides, local administrations took advantage of the peasant's ignorance and illiteracy and aggravated their already miserable life. Peasants lodged complaints with the Regional Government of Bosnia and Hercegovina in Sarajevo and cried out for help and protection, but in most cases nothing was done to alleviate their conditions. Among numerous complaints, a forty-five page handwritten document signed by 92 peasants from 24 villages in the Nevesinje district of Hercegovina and sent to the Regional Government in July, 1902, deserves special attention. One of their grievances was the denial of their ownership of purchased land. Usually, they wrote, surveyors accompanied by local leaders and the members of the local adminis-

riku početkom XX vijeka". *Glasnik Arhiva i Društva arhivskih radnika Bosne i Hercegovine*, VII, No. 7 (Sarajevo, 1967), 194.

26. Djordje Pejanović, *Stanovništvo Bosne i Hercegovine* (Belgrade, 1955), p. 43.

27. Vučo, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 274.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 276.

30. Ivan Božić and Others, *Istorija Jugoslavije* (Belgrade, 1972), p. 362.

tration visited peasants' farms to register them. If the owners did not happen to be present, the surveyors registered these farms in names supplied by local leaders. According to this document, in many cases the real owners lost a part and sometimes one half of their plots to individuals who bribed local leaders or were their close friends. Disrespect for the peasants' human dignity by most government officials hurt them more than the loss of their property. Almost all of the officials, the peasants complained, "consider us to be beasts and despise us". The condition of those miserable people was so desperate that they had only one thought in mind — "to emigrate together", and they told the Regional Government so in the first page of their complaint³¹.

Land hunger increased with the population. From 1895 to 1910 there was an increase of 329,925 persons, that is, from 1,568,092 to 1,898,044 or 21.04%³². At the same time as the need for additional land grew, the Regional Government undertook a project to settle peasants from other lands. Their number is not known. According to the official census of 1910, Bosnia and Hercegovina had 114,591 immigrants from other lands, or 6.04% of the population. About 50,000 of them were engaged in industrial and agricultural production³³. Usually they settled in the northwestern part of Bosnia where they established their villages and colonies. Unlike native peasants, who had to bear the heavy burden of taxation, newcomers were exempted from taxes for several years³⁴. Naturally, this government action caused dissatisfaction among the native population and caused hostility toward the newly settled outsiders.

One other Serbian-inhabited province of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy must be considered. This is Vojvodina, the richest South Slavic agricultural province in the Dual Monarchy. This wealth, however, contributed insignificantly to the wellbeing of the majority of the people since the largest percentage of arable land belonged to the owners of the large estates, and these were mostly non-Slavs and outsiders. In the beginning of the twentieth century they owned more than 90% of the arable land area³⁵. The rest of the land belonged

31. Bosnia-Hercegovina, Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine (Sarajevo). MSS of the Zemaljska Vlada, 1902, 1106.

32. Veselin Masleša, *Mlada Bosna* (Sarajevo, 1964), p. 52.

33. Pejanović, *op. cit.*, p. 41. Djordje Pejanović's opinion is that the total number of foreigners in Bosnia and Hercegovina in 1900 was much higher and amounted to between 180,000 and 200,000 persons. He thinks that Austria-Hungary hid the actual number of foreign immigrants for political reasons (*Ibid.*, p. 42).

34. Ferdo Hauptmann, "Regulisanje zemljišnog posjeda u Bosni i Hercegovini i počeci naseljava stranih seljaka u doba austrougarske vladavine", *Godišnjak Društva istoričara Bosne i Hercegovine*, XVI (Sarajevo, 1965), pp. 151-171.

35. *Pregled istorije jugoslovenskih naroda*, II (Belgrade, 1965), p. 90.

to the peasants, and their farms, or rather plots, averaged between one and five acres per holding. These peasants were poor and lived under miserable conditions. For instance, before the First World War, in the district of Bačka, 50.09% did not own their own houses, and 79.38% did not possess any cattle³⁶. Due to high taxes and debts a considerable number of free peasants lost their plots of land and became an agrarian proletariat. Since industry was underdeveloped, very few of them could find employment in towns and were forced to work on the large estates. Very often it was hard to find a job on those estates because native landless peasants had to compete with Hungarian peasants who immigrated to Vojvodina in large groups and who were willing to work for very low wages.

In many cases impoverished peasants went abroad, often across the Atlantic Ocean, with the desire to earn enough money to reestablish their households. Mile Zrnić's example shows clearly what reasons prompted most of Vojvodina's Serbs to leave their homes and to go to the United States.

I am going [he said] to try my luck. I cannot live here. I had 20 yokes of land. And today? Only what I have on me. I did not know how to manage my farm. Unfortunately, I borrowed some money, and this loan ruined me. When I saw that I had gotten deeply into debt, I decided to sell my land so that I could pay off my debts and go to America with the rest of the money in order to start a new life. I am full of hope. It is hard for me to go — but I cannot stay here anymore. High taxes, high costs, large family, and poor daily wages. I cannot hold myself back and stay. In America, I hear, the daily wages are much higher. So, the other day I received a letter from my neighbor Joca. He wrote that a lot of money could be made there so that it was possible to save some and to send some home. True, he wrote, the work was a bit hard, but people like me — healthy and strong — could take it³⁷.

Despite the fact that Montenegro was an independent state after 1878, its economic condition was far from satisfactory, due mostly to the unfavorable configuration of the land. Rocky terrain covered most of the state. The small plots of arable land were of poor quality. Although Montenegro lacked natural

36. Slavko Šećerov, "Socijalno-agrarni odnosi u Bačkoj pred izvođenje agrarne reforme", *Spomenik*, No. 69 (Belgrade, 1929), pp. 145-146.

37. *Zastava* (Novi Sad), No. 199, September 11 1907, p. 1. Mile Zrnić, then age 36, from the village of Tisa St. Mikluš spoke these words to Milorad Prvanov on his way to the United States.

conditions for a fruitful agricultural production, 90% of its population were peasants who tried to eke out a living from soil that could not produce enough food for everybody. In order to feed its population, the state had to import food almost every year. Often state resources did not permit the purchase of needed food, and the state depended on foreign aid. Thus, for instance, in 1898 a Serbian representative in Cetinje reported that Montenegro did not have sufficient means to acquire food for 47,000 of its people³⁸.

The distribution of land, disintegration of extended family units, and usury greatly aggravated the plight of the already poor and desperate masses. By the end of the nineteenth century one-third of the total population was without land, house, and movable property. Some wandered around without work, half-naked and hungry. Others tried to find jobs, but rarely succeeded. Still others, those who had some money, emigrated³⁹. Neither the people nor the government could do much to improve existing conditions. Emigration seemed to be the easiest solution, and the government indirectly encouraged it. However, in the long run this approach proved to be miscalculated.

The economic picture of Serbia, which became an autonomous state in 1830 and an independent state in 1878, differed significantly from all the lands of today's Yugoslavia. Already by the 1830's the outlived Ottoman feudal system was being replaced by capitalism. The capitalist mode of production began to penetrate slowly into Serbia's backward and predominantly agricultural society, bringing more harm than good to the majority of peasants. With the introduction of a money economy disintegration of the extended family group (*zadruga*) accelerated and along with it the impoverishment of the peasants. In order to protect peasants from merciless usurers. Prince Michael Obrenović issued a law on February 20, 1865 (Old Style calendar). It decreed that the last five acres of a peasant's land, his farmstead, house, farm buildings, two oxen or horses, a certain number of other livestock, tools, and necessary food for his family and farm animals could not be sold for unpaid debts either by the peasant himself or by his creditor⁴⁰. This law was revised several times, but it did not produce the desired results. With the de-

38. Djordjije-Djoko Pejović, *Iseljavanje Crnogoraca u XIX vijeku* (Titograd, 1962), p. 249.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 248.

40. *Zakonik o postupku sudskom u gradjanskim parnicama sa svim izmenama i dopunama* (Belgrade, 1909), p. 127. The Old Style calendar (generally designated as O.S.) is the Julian calendar, which Serbia and Montenegro used until 1919, after the founding of the Yugoslav Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. In the twentieth century the Julian calendar is thirteen days behind the New Style (N.S.) or Gregorian calendar.

velopment of capitalism this law was not always honored, and the number of landless peasants gradually grew. In 1876, for instance, 5% of all peasant families were without land; in 1880 this figure rose to 16%, and in 1897 it amounted to 21%⁴¹. It should be pointed out that despite all preventive measures to protect peasants from some of the consequences of capitalist production, their conditions worsened, and the economic differentiation among peasants became more and more pronounced. In only eight years (1889-1897) more than 17,000 peasants lost their farms, while in the same period 225 new landowners with estates of over 50 hectares (123.50 acres) emerged⁴². The impoverishment of peasants continued. In 1900 Serbia had 41,331 landless peasants, and 29,095 who possessed only a house. Only five years later the number of landless peasants amounted to 51,711, and those who owned only a house to 13,541⁴³.

In comparison with other Serb-inhabited lands Serbia's industry before the First World War was rather well developed, but compared to most European countries Serbia was still a backward agrarian state. The number of its industrial workers began to grow rapidly. In 1901 they numbered 3,315, and nine years later as many as 16,095⁴⁴. Their living conditions were no better than the conditions in other provinces of today's Yugoslavia. Average daily wages were 1.24 *dinars*. With such earnings most workers, especially those who supported their families, had to be economic virtuosos to be able to make both ends meet inasmuch as 1 kilogram (2.2 lbs.) of bread cost .21 *dinars*, 1 kilogram of beef .58, and 1 kilogram of lard .30 *dinars*⁴⁵. Some workers were paid much less. According to Serbia's socialist leader Dimitrije Tucović, one-third of the workers in the town of Užice were paid only from .20 to .50 *dinars* daily⁴⁶.

As can be seen, the conditions of Serbia's workers were more than miserable, and many of them were forced to earn their bread outside of their country. Most often they went to neighboring lands. Emigration to the United States began to take on somewhat larger proportions in the first decade of the twentieth century. Yet, in comparison with the South Slavic provinces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the number of Serbia's emigrants to the United States was relatively small. There were several reasons for that, including

41. *Pregled istorije jugoslovenskih naroda*, II, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

42. *Ibid.*

43. Vučo, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 229.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 232.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 233.

Serbia's political independence, the guarantee of a minimum of land to the peasants, a lack of good communications, Serbia's relatively longer distance from major ports, traditional immobility, and isolation from developed countries.

The district of Kosovo-Metohija and Macedonia were the most backward South Slavic provinces at the end of the turn of the century. Being under Ottoman rule until the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, they did not have an opportunity for normal development. Their landholding system was similar to that of Bosnia and Hercegovina, though even more severe. It was abolished by Serbia after the Balkan Wars, but the path to any noticeable economic progress was long and difficult.

Because of lack of land and the lack of jobs outside of agriculture, some peasants were forced to emigrate temporarily. Such temporary emigrations were known under the name of *pečalba*, and the peasant emigrants were known as *pečalbari*. The *pečalba* was especially widespread in Macedonia, where the *pečalbari* were most frequently the free peasants from the mountainous regions. The peasants who lived on *chifliks* seldom went on *pečalba* because their debts tied them down to the land on which they lived and which they tilled. The *pečalbari* most frequently went to neighboring states in search of income, and when they could not find jobs there, they would go across the ocean, most often to the United States. It should be pointed out that difficult economic conditions were not the chief cause for Serbian emigration from those provinces. Ottoman oppression in Macedonia and the maltreatment and terrorization of the Serbs in Kosovo-Metohija by the local Albanians were the main reasons for their flight in the first decade of the twentieth century⁴⁷.

Between the two World Wars the economic conditions of the Yugoslavs, who now lived in one state, were considerably improved, thanks especially to the agrarian reform of 1919. However, the new conditions were still far from satisfactory. Thus economic difficulties remained the chief cause of emigration. The government did next to nothing to discourage it. Indeed, it undertook measures to help those who emigrated, and it tried to direct emigration to developed countries, among which the United States held a special place. The government hoped that some emigrants would return one day after gaining an education and training in various fields and would thus be able to contribute to the development of Yugoslav industry⁴⁸. In addition, Yugoslav immigrants in the United States usually supported their families in the "old

47. *Trgovinski glasnik* (Belgrade), No. 274, December 12 1907, p. 2.

48. *Novi iseljenik* (Zagreb), No. 4 (April 1939), 2.

country” and thereby indirectly advanced the economic development of the state, her improve the economic conditions and wellbeing of the population. Despite significant results, emigration is still a large problem. Now, however, the main destination of economic emigrants is no longer America but West European countries, particularly West Germany.

3

The burden of Austro-Hungarian rule was felt in all aspects of human life in the South Slavic provinces of the Dual Monarchy. People were mistreated by almost everyone in local administration as well in the regional governments, and they could do little to protect their limited rights.

The provinces of Bosnia and Hercegovina suffered most, particularly their Serbian population, in part because these people were Orthodox and thus were considered by dominant Roman Catholic elements in the church hierarchy and government to be infidels, like the Moslems⁴⁹. The list of their grievances is endless. It is sufficient to mention only a few examples. In the village of Bukovica near Nevesinje, Hercegovina, a thirteen-year-old girl was put in chains and tortured by a forester because she shouted a warning of his approach to peasants who were burning charcoal off limits⁵⁰. Serbian road workers were not allowed to go to church on their religious holidays. When, for instance, Aleksa Soldo, a worker, asked his supervisor for leave to go to church on Orthodox Pentecost, the supervisor refused with the remark, “Bring the church here on the road or take the road to the church and then pray to God”⁵¹. Serbs had to pay fines more often than other ethnic groups, and sometimes (for it was enough just to be a Serb) for deeds they never committed⁵². The police, who should have protected the people, were among the worst oppressors of Serbian peasants in Bosnia and Hercegovina. Among numerous complaints against policemen the case of Nikola Savić from the village of Slatina near Nevesinje can be singled out as typical.

49. According to the census of 1895. Bosnia and Hercegovina had 1,568,092 inhabitants: 673,246 Orthodox (42.94%), 548,632 Moslems (34.99%), 334,142 Catholics (21.31%), and 12,072 others (.76%). Fifteen years later the total number increased to 1,898,044: 825,918 Orthodox (43.49%), 612,137 Moslems (32.25%), 434,061 Catholics (22.87%), and 26,428 others (13.9%). See Pejanović, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

50. Bosnia and Hercegovina, Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovine (Sarajevo), MSS of the Zemaljska Vlada, 1906, 1106.

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Ibid.*

When it gets dark [Savić complained to Baron Pitner in Fojnica]. I don't step out of my house. If I do go out, policemen grab me and beat me up like a dog. If I complain to the authorities, they meet me with the words, "Get out, thief, it is not true. You're a thief"⁵³.

The Serbian population in Bosnia and Hercegovina cried out for help and protection, but their cries went unheeded. The Regional Government haled into court "the worst Serbian oppositionists, and whenever they tried a Serb, they either tried him according to their wishes or according to orders"⁵⁴.

Those Serbs who could not endure this lawlessness began to emigrate, mainly to the United States. Some Serbs, however, were willing to endure the burden of oppression and humiliation a bit longer in the hope that the government would intervene on their behalf.

We shall try [a Serb from Hercegovina wrote] to stop our dear brothers from emigrating, at least for a while. If these conditions remain, and if there is no help or hope, all of us will emigrate together. We have been defending ourselves in this sad country of ours for five hundred years. Now our defence has become impossible. When we shall have no other choice but to leave our country, let us leave it together⁵⁵.

This advice was ignored by a large number of Serbs from Bosnia and Hercegovina. Their mass emigration, which began in the 1880's, accelerated gradually to reach its peak in the beginning of the twentieth century.

The treatment of Serbs in Croatia, Slavonia and Vojvodina was not much better. When a group of Serbian peasants from Croatia on their way to the United States was asked why they were leaving their homes, they replied, "We are going to see if there is still justice somewhere in the world"⁵⁶. In these provinces Germanization and Magyarization by the government were problems which affected both Serbs and Croats. These problems increased greatly in the beginning of the twentieth century. In the district of Bačka, for example, in the period 1840-1918 the number of Hungarians increased by 310%, and of Germans by 86%⁵⁷.

53. *Branik* (Novi Sad), No. 105, July 30 (O.S.)/August 12 (N.S.) 1902, 2.

54. *Odjek* (Belgrade), No. 56, February 27 1903, 1.

55. *Branik* (Novi Sad), No. 105, July 30 (O.S.)/August 12 (N.S.) 1902, 2.

56. Čeda Pavić, *Srbi i srpske organizacije u Americi* (Chicago, 1911), p. 9.

57. Božić and Others, *op. cit.*, p. 364.

The Serbian population in the Ottoman lands was terribly mistreated, especially during the last several decades of Turkish rule, when the central government had lost its effective control over local leaders. Yet, Turkish oppression was relatively mild in comparison with the terrors inflicted by the Albanians. Their killing of innocent people became a regular occurrence⁵⁸. Because of these terrors a considerable number of Serbs fled to neighboring Serbia and Montenegro. According to the Berlin newspaper *Tägliche Rundschau*, in the period from 1878 to 1907 more than 80,000 Serbs fled from Kosovo and Metohija. Around 60,000 of them settled in Serbia and Montenegro⁵⁹. Those who could acquire the necessary means escaped to the United States. It is not known how many of them tried to find a more secure life there.

The recruitment of young men into the regular Austro-Hungarian army was one of the major causes of emigration, particularly in Bosnia and Hercegovina⁶⁰. The Military Law regarding obligatory service in the Austro-Hungarian army for Bosnia and Hercegovina was promulgated on November 4, 1881. It caused great dissatisfaction among the Christian as well as the Moslem population. Since neither Christians nor Moslems could do anything to abolish it, many of them avoided it by fleeing the country⁶¹. The Serbs did not wish to serve a "foreign tsar" and they were not concerned with the defence of a state in which the majority of them had nothing to defend. Those who did not have an opportunity to escape from the country had to serve in the army of the Monarchy which many hated from the bottom of their hearts. It was torture for them because a great majority were illiterate, had never left their villages before, did not know German, and were treated disrespectfully. Therefore, desertion from the army was frequent. Almost all deserters fled the country, and most of them found refuge in the United States. Some of those who served the full term returned home sick or crippled⁶². The example of those returnees frightened the younger generation, and emigration to avoid military service grew. Some of the returnees were assigned to serve as policemen. Since it was an assignment and not an offer, those who refused to be in the Austrian police force and wanted to be free had no other choice but to flee.

58. *Amerikanski Srbobran* (Pittsburgh), No. 10, March 23 (O.S.)/April 5 (N.S.) 1906, p. 2; *Srpski narod* (Belgrade), No. 3, March 25 1905, pp. 34-36.

59. Reported in *Trgovinski glasnik* (Belgrade), No. 274, December 12 1907, 2.

60. Croatia, Arhiv Hrvatske (Zagreb), Artur Benko Grado MSS, VII/1b, 20/2, 89.

61. Hamdija Kapidžić, "Prilozi istoriji ustanka iz 1882. godine", *Godišnjak Istorijiskog društva Bosne i Hercegovine* (Sarajevo, 1951), p. 238.

62. *Branik* (Novi Sad), No. 105, July 30 (O.S.)/August 12 (N.S.) 1902, p. 2.

Savo Babić from Tiskovac in Lika, who fled to the United States in 1908, was one of them. According to him, it was easy to acquire a passport, since control was so superficial that it was only important to have some passport, no matter whose. It is interesting to mention that Babić borrowed his neighbor's passport. He returned it to him later by mail, and his neighbor used the same passport to come to the United States⁶³. Because of such lax control, some deserters reached the New World without any documents. This emigration to avoid compulsory military service continued between the two World Wars, but on a much smaller scale⁶⁴.

Political tension, persecution and the imprisonment of those who criticized Prince Nicholas' reign, and the Prince's despotism, were reasons that some Montenegrins fled to the United States. Most of these left Montenegro after the so-called "Bomb Affair" (*Bombaška afera*) in 1908 when the Montenegrin government began to persecute and to imprison leaders of the People's Party and liberal university students under the pretext that they were conspiring against the Prince. The second important event which prompted Montenegrins to leave their country was the so-called "National Revolution" of 1918. Actually it was not a revolution at all but a movement which opposed the unification of Montenegro with Serbia and advocated the full independence of Montenegro⁶⁵.

A mass emigration of Serbs to the United States for purely political reasons recurred in the first decade after the Second World War. Most of these Serbs were either former Yugoslav Army officers and soldiers, prisoners of war in Germany, or members of various political groups that opposed the Communist regime in Yugoslavia. It is impossible to establish their exact number because the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service has not recorded the post-war Yugoslav immigrants by their nationalities. The majority of them came under the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 and the Refugee Relief Act of 1953. The total number of Yugoslav immigrants under these Acts amounted to 50,792, and it is likely that over half were Serbs⁶⁶. The number of those who declared themselves to be political immigrants grew, and by July, 1974, an additional 31,559 Yugoslavs were admitted⁶⁷. There is no way to establish for certain how many of them were Serbs.

63. Interview with Mr. Savo Babić, Milwaukee, USA.

64. Slavko Gotovac, "Ljudi sa pozajmljenim imenima", *Iseljenički kalendar* (Sarajevo, 1969), p. 146.

65. Stanko Danilović, "Nešto o selenju Crnogoraca", *Bankarstvo* (Zagreb), No. 5 (May 1926), 228.

66. U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, *1974 Annual Report* (Washington, D.C., 1974), p. 35.

67. *Ibid.*

Exaggerated stories about America, the material help from those who emigrated there, and the influence of returnees had a significant impact on a great number of Serbs and prompted many of them to try their luck in that country. However, it should be pointed out that all of these factors, to which one might add the enticements of travel agents, were not the actual causes for emigration but merely incentives. If it was easy to persuade poor peasants to leave their homes it was because, as has been seen, the economic and political conditions for emigration were ripe.

Stories about opportunities for making money in the United States spread throughout the South Slavic lands, reaching even the smallest and most primitive villages. "There are some places", Ivan Lupis, an expert in South Slavic emigration, wrote in 1910, "where our common people, left to themselves, neither know nor are interested in anything else but their places of birth and America"⁶⁸. The material prosperity of those families whose members had emigrated to the United States impressed peasants most, and they dreamed of that promised land and how they might go there themselves to earn some money, to improve their situation at home, and pull their families out of misery and poverty. The opportunity came to many, and they went to that land full of hope.

However, shortly after their arrival, they confronted the reality and realized that their dreams would never be fulfilled. A great number of them could not make ends meet, and those who were unable to find jobs had to live off the charity of their countrymen⁶⁹. Some disappointed men tried to hide their difficulties from their families. They usually borrowed money and sent it to them and wrote nice letters exaggerating their living conditions. Such letters and material help encouraged many peasants to follow their neighbors, relatives, or friends to America.

But there were those who wrote the truth about their life and disappointment in the land of promise. The *Carigradski Glasnik* (Herald of Constantinople) published a letter which a Krsto Zorić sent to his relative in Prizren. He wrote that he had dreamed of America, "the paradise on earth", and came to it with the aim of digging gold and returning home with a lot of money.

But now [he wrote] I realize that I made a mistake when I left my beautiful Bogeševci [village] and came here. It would have been

68. Ivo Lj. Lupis, *O iseljavanju našega naroda i o Americi* (Zadar, 1910), p. 4.

69. *Cetinjski vjesnik* (Cetinje), No. 21, March 13 1910, p. 2.

better to beg in Europe than to die here of hunger ... I can tell you now that I will not long for gold anymore. If only I could escape from America. I would not be worthy of the name Serb but that of any wild animal if ever I would come again to America and live this kind of life. I would rather go to the devil in hell than come here again. I used to see nothing but happiness in America, but I won't live this way anymore⁷⁰.

There were many similar letters. Some of the Serbian emigrants used much stronger language to express their disappointment and sometimes hostility toward the country they once admired and dreamed of. For instance, Jovo Vrbica went so far in his letter to Stevo Martinović in Cetinje to call it "a dog's country"⁷¹. It would be a great mistake to assume that all Serbian immigrants in the United States were without money and unable to help their families in the "old country". Many of them did manage to find jobs, and they succeeded by hard work and self-sacrifice in saving enough money to improve their households at home. They did appreciably raise the standard of living and status of their families, and, in many cases, this was their only and final goal.

Various agents contributed a great deal to the emigration of Serbs to the United States, especially before the First World War. In regard to their activities they can be divided into the following groups: private agents, agents in the service of certain countries, travel agents, agents of steamship companies, and agents of American industrial companies. They spread their activities throughout the South Slavic lands, and usually hired natives to work for them. The best known among these were Božo Banac and Franjo Šarić from Dubrovnik; Pejča Nikolić, Milutin Milosavljević and Mihailo Jovanović from the district of Niš; and the Stanković brothers of Pirot. They used all available means to persuade people to emigrate to the United States. Their principal motto was "the more emigrants, the more money", and many followed it without the slightest concern for the wellbeing and the future of their clients.

A large number of peasants sold everything they had to pay for their trip to America, but, swindled by agents, they lost their money without reaching their desired destination. Thus, for instance, two agents swindled a group of peasants in Eastern Serbia. They provided them with false passports and took from them a certain sum of money, ostensibly insurance which was to guarantee them a free return to Serbia in the event that they did not like America. How-

70. *Carigradski glasnik* (Istanbul), No. 8, February 22 1908, pp. 3-4.

71. *Bratinstvo* (Belgrade), No. 8, March 3 1906, p. 2.

ever, with these false documents they could go no farther than Greece, where they were turned back to Serbia⁷².

The case of a Mihailo Cvetković was somewhat different. He sold his entire estate and a grocery store for 2,300 *dinars*. He paid 800 *dinars* of this amount to agents for his ticket. The ticket was false, and at the port of Rijeka (Fiume) he was expelled from a ship. Since he could not continue his voyage, he returned to Belgrade where, when his money ran out, he had to work as a waiter in a tavern⁷³.

It is worth mentioning that some tailors cooperated with agents because the latter bought suits from them for their clients. Most often these merchants sold the cheapest suits for the price of the most expensive ones⁷⁴. Such suits were of such poor quality that they wore out before the emigrants ever reached the United States⁷⁵.

As far as is known, three governments — those of Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria — either had their own agents or worked through private ones. Austria-Hungary, which ruled the majority of the South Slavs, more or less encouraged emigration during the nineteenth century. The exodus of South Slavic emigrants made it easier to bring in non-Slavic colonists in their place; moreover, emigration brought in foreign currency, lessened tensions in subject provinces, brought some extra income from contracts with steamship companies, and so on. In 1903, for instance, the Austro-Hungarian government concluded a contract with the British Cunard Line of Liverpool by which the former was obliged to send 30,000 emigrants a year on the former's ships⁷⁶.

When the need occurred, the Austro-Hungarian government did not hesitate to take certain measures to encourage emigration. Thus, in preparation for the annexation of Bosnia and Hercegovina in 1908, its agents actively promoted emigration from Montenegro to the United States with the aim of reducing Montenegro's military power and thus forestalling Montenegrin intervention⁷⁷. In the provinces under the Ottoman Empire, where it was easy to get a passport, various agents found their work among the oppressed peasantry to encourage emigration to be very fruitful. Bulgarian agents spread their activities throughout Serbia, and helped numerous Serbs, who could not

72. *Politika* (Belgrade), No. 2933, March 17 1912, p. 1.

73. *Ibid.*, No. 3702, May 4 1914, p. 1.

74. *Ibid.*, No. 2970, April 25 1912, p. 1.

75. *Narodni glas* (Chicago), No. 43, October 10 1912, p. 3.

76. *Srpsko kolo* (Zagreb), No. 13, July 1 (O.S.)/July 14 (N.S.) 1903, p. 7.

77. Pejović, *op. cit.*, pp. 382-383.

get a passport or were unable to pay the required fee for them, to emigrate to America with Bulgarian or Romanian passports. Some of these agents were, according to the Serbian press, supported by the Bulgarian government. Among these one of the best known was N. Khristov. He lived and worked in the Romanian town of Orsova, in an office which looked "like a ministry", helped by more than twenty officials. In addition to these, an equal number of agents travelled about through Serbia recruiting peasants for emigration⁷⁸. Serbian teachers, among other Serbs, assisted them and were paid 10 *dinars* for every man recruited⁷⁹.

This depletion of the Serbian population through the activities of agents drew the attention of the Serbian press and of politicians who strongly opposed emigration. The press took a leading role against such activities, advocating protection of the uneducated masses who were easily victimized. Almost every newspaper in Serbia as well as Serbian newspapers in the Austro-Hungarian lands published articles about the harm that agents' activities brought to the Serbian people. Politicians in the Austro-Hungarian lands were also concerned with that problem and tried to find a way, if not to stop emigration, then to control it and to protect peasants of all nationalities from being cheated. Speaking about the problem in the Dalmatian Diet in Zadar (Zara) on October 4, 1907, representative Juraj Biankini emphasized the seriousness of agents' activities and their consequences for Dalmatia.

Those heartless agents [he said] are the bane of our people! Because of these bloodsuckers a mass emigration has begun in our province. It is the general conviction that the agents of various steamship companies encouraged a large number of our emigrants. It is a public secret that these agents trade in human flesh, that they persuade and deceive people until they leave their homes and fly abroad⁸⁰.

5

As was indicated, the mass emigration of Serbs to the United States began in the 1880's and reached its peak in 1907. The largest number emigrated from Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia and Slavonia, Montenegro, and Vojvodina. The emigration of Serbs from other provinces was considerably smaller.

78. *Politika* (Belgrade), No. 3702, May 4 1914, p. 1.

79. *Carigradski glasnik* (Istanbul), No. 16, April 18 1908, p. 1.

80. *Brzopisno izvješće XXXXI zasjedanja Pokrajinskoga Sabora dalmatinskog* (Zadar, 1907), p. 1090.

While Dalmatia had the largest percentage of emigrants among the South Slavic provinces, the number of Serbian emigrants from Dalmatia was relatively small because Serbs were in such a minority in Dalmatia. According to the 1890 census, Dalmatia had only 87,009 Serbs or 16.5% of the total population; by 1900 their number increased to 96,279, but their percentage dropped to 16.2%⁸¹.

In the beginning of this period of mass emigration to America the Serbs came individually or in very small groups, but around the turn of the century groups of emigrants became larger and numbered as many as thirty persons to a group. Emigration became a mania. The most difficult thing was to get the money for travelling expenses, but everything else was easy⁸². In the provinces under Austria-Hungary almost every family had somebody in America. Its name was on the lips of everyone. The Montenegrins, for instance, devoted some of their folksongs to the country in which their sons, husbands, and boyfriends worked. They sang:

America, thou dewy flower,
There is none who does not like you,
Neither child of but two years,
Nor man of a full hundred years⁸³.

The emigration of particularly the Montenegrins took on such proportions that it became alarming. It is believed that before the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, around 20,000 Montenegrins lived in the United States — a very large number for a country of just 200,000 people⁸⁴. The great majority of them were men between 19 and 24 years of age. Their absence created military and social problems for the state. Its military power was considerably weakened, and many girls remained unmarried⁸⁵.

The emigration of Serbs from Austria-Hungary was also extensive, particularly in the province of Hercegovina. According to Austro-Hungarian official records, shortly before the First World War there were in the United States 9,086 Serbs between 20 and 40 years of age who emigrated from Bosnia

81. Lakatoš, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

82. Danilović, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

83. *Ibid.*

84. *Ibid.*, p. 228. The statistical data regarding the number of Montenegrins in the United States before the First World War differ greatly. For instance, according to Hermann Wendel, their number in 1903 amounted to 40,000. See Hermann Wendel, *Borba Jugoslovena za slobodu i jedinstvo*, trans. Milan S. Nedić (Belgrade: Narodna prosveta, 1925), p. 500.

85. *Ibid.*; Pejović, *op. cit.*, pp. 371-403.

and Hercegovina⁸⁶. Some places lost almost all their healthy young men. Thus, for instance, Kruševica, in Hercegovina, was practically left without them so that more than 150 of its young women between 18 and 30 years of age were unable to find husbands⁸⁷.

It is impossible to establish the exact number of Serbs from Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia, and Vojvodina who emigrated to the United States before the outbreak of the First World War. There are several reasons for that: statistical data is fragmentary; many Serbs emigrated either without a passport or with a borrowed one; some of them used assumed names; some declared themselves as Germans or Hungarians in the hope of receiving better treatment and privileges; and United States official statistics did not consistently identify Serbian immigrants as Serbs. Rather, South Slavs were indistinguishably lumped together in three groups: (1) Croats and Slovenes; (2) Serbs, Montenegrins and Bulgarians; and (3) Dalmatians, Bosnians and Hercegovinians. Yet, on the basis of available data, it can be estimated that by 1914 between 80,000 and 90,000 Serbs from the above mentioned provinces emigrated to the United States

It has been the general belief that an insignificant number of Serbs from Serbia emigrated to America before the First World War, and that Serbia did not have an emigration problem. However, the documents show the opposite. True, Serbia's problem was not as great as that of other South Slavic lands, but still not so trivial as to be ignored. The available sources indicate that the main wave of Serbia's emigration to America took place, as was true for the other provinces, in the early 1900's. It was particularly noticeable in Macedonia and Old Serbia, which became a part of the Kingdom of Serbia in 1913. As early as 1905 Serbia's press began to point to the damage that a mass emigration could bring to the Serbian people in these provinces. It was aware of problems which forced Serbs to flee and of the hard life which awaited illiterate people in the United States. As the newspaper *Srpski Narod* (Serbian People) asked:

What then is to be done? A Serb can expect ruin in his own country as well as abroad. Yet, Serb from Old Serbia and Macedonia, in moments of crisis, use all your might to avoid emigration and stay at home These conditions will not last forever⁸⁸.

86. Hamdija Kapidžić, "Bosanci i Hercegovci u Americi pred izbijanje prvog svjetskog rata", *Iseljenički kalendar* (Sarajevo, 1970), p. 183.

87. Hamdija Kapidžić, "Zašto su Hercegovci išli u Ameriku", *Iseljenički kalendar* (Sarajevo, 1968), p. 172.

88. *Srpski narod* (Belgrade), No. 3, March 25 1905, p. 36.

There are no statistical data regarding the emigration of Serbs from these provinces to the United States. But on the basis of newspaper accounts it can be assumed that it took on rather large proportions. According to Novi Sad's *Zastava* (The Banner), the number of Serbs from Old Serbia and Macedonia who emigrated to America with the assistance of Bulgarian agents was so large that special trains from Niš to Belgrade had to be introduced for them⁸⁹.

The Kingdom of Serbia did not remain immune from the wave of emigration. Her southern parts were affected most. On March 3, 1907 (Old Style), the chief of the district of Vranje informed the Minister of Interior about the increasing number of young men between nineteen and twenty years of age who were requesting passports for trips to America in search of employment. "Their travelling looks to me", he wrote, "more like emigration", and he asked the Minister to issue a regulation concerning those who wished to leave for the United States⁹⁰. The emigration of young men became particularly noticeable very shortly before the First Balkan War. When, in September or 1912, mobilization was declared, of those who were subject to conscription in Donji Studen, in the district of Niš, for instance, 189 men were abroad, mainly in the United States.

The successful activities of Bulgarian agents and increased emigration were criticized sharply in Serbian newspapers, both in Serbia and in the United States. They blamed the government of Serbia for neglecting that problem, and called upon it to take necessary measures to remove the evil that was slowly penetrating Serbian society. In addition, the press devoted considerable space to the miserable living conditions of many Serbs in the New World⁹¹.

America has become for the Serbian nationality [*Mali Žurnal* wrote in 1904] another sad and unhappy Kosovo which seeks to destroy it Where are you, Serbian sages and patriots? Do you not see that this American Kosovo will be worse than the old one if you do not stop this wound [emigration] and find a remedy for this Serbian plague.... The Serbs in America are crying out for help. What have we done here at home? What are our sages and leaders doing, and what is their main concern? They are trying to prove who is the best among them, who is the foremost, the most honest and brilliant

89. *Zastava* (Novi Sad), No. 68, March 25 1907, pp. 1-2.

90. Serbia, Arhiv Srbije (Belgrade), MUD-P, PF 18, RB 74/1907.

91. Miliwoje Ristić, "Emigracija za Ameriku", *Radničke novine* (Belgrade), No. 67, March 19 1914, p. 2.

Serb and patriot. They quarrel amongst themselves and distrust one another. But all of us are not worth a tinker's damn⁹².

The Serbian press in the United States used much stronger language in its criticism. It attacked particularly the police of Serbia, accusing them of collaborating with various agents. "The police are always", *Narodni Glas* (The People's Voice) wrote in 1912, "on the side of the capitalist villains, bandits, and thieves"⁹³.

It is not known how many Serbs left the Kingdom of Serbia and went to the United States. Probably a rather large number, because the problem of an extensive emigration to America was discussed in the People's Assembly and because the government issued several laws and regulations with the aim of reducing it. The Passport Fee law of 1911 was undoubtedly the most important. It set a fee of as much as 250 *dinars* for a passport to America, whereas the fee for neighboring countries amounted to only 6 *dinars*⁹⁴. The former was an enormous sum of money for an average worker who earned around 40 *dinars* a month⁹⁵. This law provoked protests from among liberal elements of Serbian society. They were right in pointing out that the government's approach was a wrong one. Instead of removing the main causes which prompted people to leave their country, the government tried to hinder them from emigrating, but it thereby only aggravated the existing problem and indirectly created a fertile terrain for the activities of various agents.

One of the most vociferous opponents of this tax was Triša Kaclerović, socialist and member of the National Assembly. Speaking in the Assembly on March 10 (Old Style), 1911, he said:

By the introduction of this tax you are admitting the fact which lately exists, and that fact is: the emigration of poor people..... Create better economic, cultural, and social conditions for the people, and workers will not emigrate. Since you have not done so, you do not have the right to prevent the freedom of movement and the freedom to work⁹⁶.

92. *Mali žurnal* (Belgrade), No. 73, March 13 1904, p. 1.

93. *Narodni glas* (Chicago), No. 43, October 10 1912, p. 3.

94. Serbia, *Rad Narodne skupštine. Stenografske beleške za 1910-11 godinu*, II (Belgrade, 1911), p. 41.

95. Vučo, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

96. Serbia, *Narodna skupština. XCIX redovni sastanak. Stenografske beleške* (Belgrade, 1911), p. 9.

The *Narodni Glas* [The People's Voice] in Chicago also opposed this action by the Serbian government. By this tax, the newspaper wrote in 1912, "the government prevented *free* and *regular* emigration and made it impossible for unfortunate persons, who *were forced* to emigrate, to leave without agents, but threw them into the jaws of those bandits and beasts who cheat them and fleece them to their bones"⁹⁷.

In addition to discouraging emigration to the United States, the Serbian government made attempts to bring Serbs from America to the liberated provinces of Old Serbia and Macedonia after the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. This action was opposed by radicals who urged emigrants to ignore the government's invitation.

The eyes of our patriotic capitalists [*Radničke Novine* (The Workers' News) wrote in 1914] are eagerly fixed on 100,000 Serbian workers whose poverty drove them to America, but who improved their conditions and became stronger through their struggle for a living. These people are sending back word to the gentlemen who have invited them that they cannot put their necks under a yoke even if it be made of Serbian wood⁹⁸.

It is not known whether Serbian workers in America responded positively to that invitation and, if they did, how many of them returned to Serbia and settled in the liberated provinces.

The emigration question was frequently discussed by regional and local governments in the provinces under Austro-Hungarian rule, but almost nothing was done to dissuade people from leaving their homes. True, several laws, decrees, and regulations were issued, but with the aim of controlling emigration rather than preventing it. There was one noteworthy measure, and that came from Emperor and King Francis Joseph I. On November 26, 1907, he proclaimed amnesty for all military deserters from the Monarchy⁹⁹. By this act many Serbs abroad, mostly in the United States, became free to return home. It is not known how many did.

The Serbian press in all provinces of today's Yugoslavia and prominent individuals made great efforts to prevent the mass emigration of Serbs. The press published letters by numerous immigrants in the United States who either could not find employment or who lived in misery. The letter of a Georgije Šakić can be singled out among many. He described the consequences

97. *Narodni glas* (Chicago), No. 43, October 10 1912, p. 3.

98. *Radničke novine* (Belgrade), No. 139, June 16 1914, p. 1.

99. *Smotra dalmatinska* (Zadar), No. 96, November 30 1907, p. 1.

of unemployment in Canada and America, and advised Serbs in the "old country" to stay at home.

A very cold winter [he wrote], Christmas is close, and hundreds of thousands of people are without jobs. Oh, dear God, who knows what great misfortunes we poor workers will have to face in cold and distant America¹⁰⁰.

Besides individual letters, the Serbian press in the South Slavic provinces published appeals of Serbian groups in the United States which called upon Serbs in those provinces to remain in their country. Such an appeal was published in 1907 in Dubrovnik's *Srpska Zora* (Serbian Dawn). A group of Serbian immigrants wrote:

Serbs, our brothers! We beg you and swear to you by all that is most sacred to us that, if you must suffer and be hungry, be hungry and suffer there where your country is, whose every foot has been bought with the blood of countless victims.

*Serbs? Remain at your hearths*¹⁰¹!

Some Serbs in the homeland joined Serbian immigrants in America in the campaign against the emigration of their compatriots. They spoke at various meetings about the harmful effects that a mass emigration of Serbs could bring to the Serbian nationality as a whole, about the difficult life of many Serbs in America, and urged them to remain in their homeland¹⁰². There were also those who recommended the founding of a society against emigration, and they called upon patriotic institutions and organizations to take a part in convincing potential emigrants that emigration would bring them more harm than good¹⁰³. It should be mentioned that some newspapers opposed only the emigration of illiterate people, who were "easily cheated and exploited" abroad, and urged local governments to stop issuing passports to them¹⁰⁴.

Most often the Serbian press at home published appeals permeated with nationalism; hoping that such appeals would have the best effect among Serbs, who were very proud of their nationality and who were ready to do almost

100. *Srpsko kolo* (Zagreb), No. 1, January 2 (O.S.)/January 15 (N.S.) 1914, p. 4.

101. *Srpska zora* (Dubrovnik), No. 23, November 27 (O.S.)/December 10 (N.S.) 1907, p. 2.

102. Lazo Horvat, "Naše iseljeničko pitanje ili šta nam je Amerika dala i donela", *Prirednik* (Zagreb), No. 18, September 20 (O.S.)/October 8 (N.S.) 1912, pp. 277-284.

103. *Trgovinski glasnik* (Belgrade), No. 236, October 24 1907, p. 2.

104. *Pučki glas* (Zadar), No. 25, October 11 1907, p. 2.

anything for the sake of it. As Milorad Prvanov, a journalist, wrote in 1907 in a Novi Sad newspaper:

Serb? Do not leave your abode and homeland! In these hard days stay here, where you are, and let us fight shoulder to shoulder for survival and the development of all that is Serbian. Let us not split off and emigrate because we thereby weaken ourselves. Every Serb ought to be a patriot, and he ought to fight resolutely and to work for the strengthening of the Serbian nationality¹⁰⁵.

All these efforts to prevent a mass emigration of Serbs to the United States proved to be more or less fruitless. The extensive emigration continued up to the outbreak of the First World War. For reasons already indicated, it is impossible to establish the exact number of Serbs who had emigrated to the United States by 1914. The most acceptable estimate, based on various sources, would be between 120.000 and 130.000 people¹⁰⁶. Most of them planned to earn some money and to return to their homes and families. However, because of various circumstances, a large number remained in the United States for good. German politician, journalist, and historian Hermann Wendel rightly pointed out that by such an extensive emigration, including all the South Slavic nationalities, Yugoslavia lost "a great deal of her power which has gone from her as blood leaking from an open wound"¹⁰⁷.

After the First World War the emigration of Serbs from the South Slavic lands, now the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, decreased considerably due mainly to the United States Quota Acts of 1921, 1924 and 1929. By the Act of 1921, 6,426 Yugoslavs could immigrate to the United States, by the Act of 1924 only 671, and by the Act of 1929 their number was increased to 845¹⁰⁸. As can be seen, after 1924 the number of Yugoslavs permitted to immigrate was very small, taking into consideration that the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes had a population of around 13 million. These acts were designed not only to limit immigration, but to select immigrants on the basis of race and nationality as well, and this selection was the chief reason for such small quotas for the Yugoslavs. They were considered inferior and as such undesirable for American society. In order to show that racial

105. *Zastava* (Novi Sad), No. 199, September 11 1907, p. 1.

106. Branko Lazarević, "Broj Jugoslovena u Americi", *Nova Evropa* (Zagreb), No. 1, March 21 1921, pp. 10-15.

107. Wendel, *op. cit.*, p. 501.

108. *Whom Shall We Welcome* — Report of the President's Commission on Immigration and Naturalization (Washington, D.C. 1953), p. 77.

and national discrimination did exist, it is sufficient to cite an anthropologist at the American Museum of Natural History, Madison Grant. In his book *The Passing of the Great Race*, published in 1916, he observed:

These new immigrants were no longer exclusively members of the Nordic race as were the earlier ones.... The new immigration.. contained a large and increasing number of the weak, broken and the mentally crippled of all races drawn from the lowest stratum of the Mediterranean basin and the Balkans, together with the hordes, of the wretched, submerged populations of the Polish Ghettos. Our jails, insane asylums and almshouses are filled with this human flotsam and the whole tone of American life, social, moral and political has been lowered and vulgarized by them¹⁰⁹.

With the creation of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918, a large number of South Slavs left the United States and returned home. By 1939 the number of returnees amounted to 81,093¹¹⁰. It cannot be established how many of them were Serbs, but it is probably safe to assume that at least one-half were, because a great many Serbian immigrants in America were enthusiastically for the new state which was controlled by Serbs and ruled by the Serbian dynasty. In addition, a huge campaign for returning to the Kingdom was organized throughout America¹¹¹. In that same year, 1939, the number of Yugoslavs who emigrated to the United States was somewhat smaller and amounted to 74,976, that is, 6,117 fewer than the returnees¹¹². Again it is not possible to establish how many of these were Serbs. The number probably did not exceed 15,000. It should be pointed out that a great majority of Serbs who emigrated between the two wars were economic emigrants.

Just after the Second World War Serbs continued to emigrate to the United States. However, at that time few came for purely economic reasons. In addition to the previously mentioned political immigrants, the majority of Serbian immigrants in the decade or so after the Second World War were

109. Cited in Oscar Handlin, *Immigration as a Factor in American History* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1959), p. 184.

110. *Quarterly Review of Yugoslav Migration* (Zagreb), No. 3 (July-September 1931), p. 1: Croatia, *Archiv Hrvatske* (Zagreb), Artur Benko Grado MSS, III/2b, 20/2. 30; Kingdom of Yugoslavia, *Statistički godišnjak* (Belgrade) for 1929, I (1932), p. 123; for 1932, IV (1934), p. 70; for 1938-1939 (1939), p. 154; and for 1940 (1941), p. 138.

111. *Amerikanski Srbobran* (Pittsburg), No. 1125, December 31 1918, p. 2; No. 1128, January 6 1919, p. 5; No. 1270, July 8 1919, p. 2; *Srbadija* (New York), No. 9, June 23 1921, p. 1.

112. *Quarterly Review of Yugoslav Migration*, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

members of the political immigrants' families, their close relatives, and their relatives' families. Only more recently have Serbs and other Yugoslavs been coming largely to better their economic and professional status.

6

In the earliest days of Serbian emigration to the United States it was easy to obtain all the necessary documents. If for any reason someone could not get them, he could travel without them, and many did. In most South Slavic lands emigration was not regulated, and people went wherever they wished, or, rather, wherever they could. Later on, national or provincial governments introduced various regulations, but the Serbian people, though largely uneducated and often illiterate, found ways to avoid these.

To obtain money for travel was the most important hurdle. The first emigrants were forced to borrow money from wealthy merchants and townsmen at very high interest rates. However, those Serbs who emigrated at the beginning of the twentieth century were in a somewhat better position as far as travelling expenses were concerned. A large number of them travelled with prepaid tickets bought by their relatives or friends in America. This arrangement was much more convenient for Serbian emigrants and freed them from dependence on moneylenders who charged high interest. There were quite a few, however, who could not or did not wish to acquire prepaid tickets, but preferred to sell everything they had to obtain the necessary means for their trip.

Because of great competition among steamship companies, a ticket from Europe to the United States was rather cheap. A ticket from Rijeka (Fiume) to New York cost between 100 and 150 crowns (\$20 to \$30)¹¹³. However, it was not rare for emigrants who were cheated by agents to pay more than several times the actual cost of a ticket. In Serbia, for instance, emigrants paid agents as much as 800 to 1200 *dinars* for tickets which cost only 250 *dinars*¹¹⁴.

Emigration of someone to America, particularly at the end of the nineteenth century, was a special event, not only for the family whose member was leaving, but for the entire village. Sometimes the entire village saw its member or members off to the nearest railroad station. Most often the train trips were all but unbearable. Railroad cars were so overcrowded that people had to

113. Većeslav Holjevac, *Hrvati izvan domovine* (Zagreb, 1968), p. 25.

114. Ristić, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

stand, sometimes for days, without decent food, fresh water, or fresh air¹¹⁵. Yet such travellers could be considered lucky in comparison with those who, for lack of public transportation, had to make their way on foot to a railroad station or to a port, not only for days but sometimes weeks and months.

This mass exodus of unfortunate people disturbed Serbian poet Aleksa Šantić, and he gave a picturesque description of their departure in his poem *Hljeb* (Bread):

The steamship is ready, the sea troubled,
The last red flames subside in the west.
From the autumn sky the dusky twilight
Slowly descends on the rocky crags.

The deck is crowded. Many arms, lifted,
Send the last good-byes waving handkerchiefs.
In the crowd — our folk too; I recognize them:
They lean at the rail in their silent grief.

—Fellow countrymen, where do you go, how far?
“Over there, yonder! For we were cursed by fate,
The heavens sent upon us heavy storms...”

Do you not feel sorry for your native land?
“Yes, we do, brother... May our Lord bless it...
But we have no bread... Bread... There is none...”¹¹⁶.

Serbian emigrants started their voyage to America from large European ports such as Trieste, Rijeka (Fiume) Cherbourg, Hamburg, Bremen, Le Havre, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and others, on the steamships of various European and American companies. The voyage usually lasted between 15 and twenty days. Most often travelling conditions were bad. It will be sufficient to quote from a report of the Dutch public welfare association “Landverhuizing”. It reads in part:

The accommodation on board emigrant vessels is seldom in accordance with modern ideas concerning the transport of passen-

115. Hinko Sirovatka, *Kako je u Americi i kome se isplati onamo putovati* (Zagreb, 1907), p. 8.

116. Aleksa Šantić, *Pjesme* (Belgrade, 1950), p. 98, Translated by Biljana Šljivić - Šimšić.

gers. Only too often the emigrants are transported as if they were human packages.

Large numbers of emigrants are crowded together in a comparatively small space, part of which is in the lower part of the vessel. Bunks to the number of 32 and more are placed close together, forming a compact mass with narrow passages between....

Part of the accommodation is often used as a dining room, and this makes conditions still worse on account of the bad ventilation. In bad weather, when the passengers are seasick, the position becomes intolerable¹¹⁷.

Some steamship owners tried to make extra money by introducing a medical examination of their passengers despite the fact that passengers were examined before embarking. In many cases some of the passengers, though healthy, were found to be "sick" and treated. Thus, for instance, a Petar Janković, a Serb from Slavonski Brod, paid for the "treatment" of his eye as much as \$13 on the French ship "La Savoie". For that sum, which was considerable for 1914 and enormous for him, Janković was treated only once with several eye drops¹¹⁸.

Ellis Island was the last obstacle for the emigrant. For those who passed inspection the gates of the United States were open. However, those who could not pass inspection tried to enter illegally. The second group was composed of those who either did not possess required documents or were found to be not healthy. According to American law they had to return, but some did not; they usually went to Mexico, Canada, or Cuba, and later entered the United States with the help of smugglers. Such ventures were dangerous because every captured illegal alien faced prison terms of one to two years and then was deported. The penalties for smugglers were more severe; in addition to imprisonment, they had to pay a fine of several hundred dollars for each smuggled person¹¹⁹. In spite of such severe penalties, illegal immigrants and smugglers took their chances, and sometimes the former paid with their lives. According to *Iseljenik* (The Emigrant), a Zagreb journal, when smugglers spied the boats of the American Coast Guard, they threw their passengers into the ocean to

117. Edith Abbott, *Immigration* (Chicago, 1924), p. 80.

118. *Srpsko kolo* (Zagreb), No. 25, June 19 (O.S.)/July 2 (N.S.) 1914, pp. 4-5.

119. *Iseljenik* (Zagreb), No. 15, August 1 1925, p. 2.

protect themselves from penalties¹²⁰. Most of these passengers drowned. It is not known for certain whether there were Serbs among these cases and, if so, how many.

It should be added that Serbian emigrants on Ellis Island had to face two additional problems — the bribing of American officials and the brutality of travel agents. There were cases of healthy persons who, if they did not pay a certain sum of money, were found to be “sick” and thus denied entry; there were also cases of sick persons who gained entry through bribery¹²¹. The travel agents, who often owned hotels and restaurants, tried to extract from their passengers as much money as they could. If someone complained and tried to protect his rights, the agents did not hesitate to use physical force. Thus, for instance, Ilija Vuinović, a Serbian emigrant in 1906, recalled that when one of the immigrants in New York protested against some of his agent’s actions, the agent “hit him between the eyes”¹²².

From Ellis Island and later other ports the Serb immigrants spread throughout the United States, full of hope and optimism. Frightened and lost in a strange society composed of numerous races and nationalities, they began their new life, a life of insecurity and uncertainty, never dreaming that America would become their new country. The beginning was difficult, but they were not discouraged. Nurtured with hope and pride, they were determined to overcome all obstacles on the path to a better life.

California State University San Marcos
San Marcos, California
USA

120. *Ibid.*

121. *Smotra dalmatinska* (Zadar), No. 76, September 22 1906, p. 2.

122. Ilija Vuinović, *Kad navru sjećanja* (Sarajevo, 1970), p. 25.