

Dragoslav Djordjević, *Na raskrsnici '41* (At the Crossroads '41), Gornji Mladenovac: Dečje novine, 1991, XIV + 204 pp., ill.

Since the unification of the South Slavs in 1918, the situation in the new state of Yugoslavia was complicated and extremely difficult, particularly politically. All efforts of King Alexander and his government to find a solution for a normal development of the state did not bring the desired result. After his assassination in 1934, the situation in the state deteriorated. Since Alexander's son Peter was too young to rule the state, the state was ruled by a regency led by Prince Paul. However, he did not have any training and experience in statesmanship and was not much interested in it. Yet, he tried his best to preserve tranquility in the state by offering some concessions, especially to the Croats, who were most vocal and dissatisfied with the state policy.

Despite all internal problems and foreign pressures, Prince Paul and his government tried to preserve Yugoslavia's neutrality before and in the beginning of World War II. However, under great pressure from Germany and its promise that Yugoslavia would not be attacked, Paul's government signed secretly the Tripartite Pact on March 25, 1941. This action of the government caused dissatisfaction among many army officers who organized a coup d'état on March 27 of the same year. Prince Paul resigned as regent and the leaders of the coup proclaimed young Peter, King Peter II of Yugoslavia. The complex political situation in Yugoslavia before and immediately after the signing of the Pact is the main subject of *Na raskrsnici '41* by Dragoslav Djordjević.

Djordjević's approach to his topic is unorthodox which makes the book unusual and very interesting. It is a combination of chronological presentation, correspondence and personal interviews. The first chapter/part, "Two Days in Yugoslav History - March 25 and 26, 1941", is a chronological account of the political events in Yugoslavia before the Tripartite Pact was signed and its immediate consequences. It is interesting to emphasize that the author analyzed quite well the reactions of a number of foreign countries in Europe and the United States regarding the coup d'état. Most of them praised it. For instance, the British press printed special editions of its publications greeting the coup in Belgrade. The reaction of the American press was similar. *The Christian Science Monitor*, for example, considered the Serbs as one of the bravest people in Europe. However, the reaction of Germany and its allies was completely different. The destruction of Yugoslavia was their final goal. All diplomatic maneuvers of General Dušan Simović, the head of the new

government, to preserve Yugoslavia's neutrality were fruitless.

Writing about the relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, Djordjević is critical, emphasizing that the Treaty of Friendship and Non-aggression signed between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in April, 1941 was worthless because the Soviet Union did not do anything to stop the German attack and invasion of Yugoslavia but indirectly speeded it up. According to Djordjević, Germany attacked Yugoslavia "not only because of British involvement, but much more because of the Soviet influence in Belgrade" (p. 48).

The second part of the book entitled, "Conversation and Correspondence with his Royal Highness Prince Paul (1968-1975)", can be considered a primary historical source because thus far the correspondence between Prince Paul and the author and their private conversation have not been published anywhere. The correspondence shows the Prince in a different light than many historians have written about him. His correspondence and personal conversation with the author show that he was well-educated, sincere, sensitive, quite modest, warm, very polite, and not a politician. Despite the fact that he had a number of offers to write his memoirs, he categorically refused to do it because he firmly believed that he could not be objective writing about himself. It is important to mention that the Prince admitted to Djordjević that he never believed that King Alexander would designate him to be a regent. In addition, he pointed out that he never liked the power. "How could I rule in the country", he said to the author, "where no one liked me. I always thought just a few more months and I will go" (p. 114).

The second part of the book provides new information about Prince Paul as a man, and as a regent, his opinion of some prominent politicians in his government, reasons for his political decisions, regrets, the political situation, diplomatic maneuvering in Europe before and during World War II.

"My Work in the Soviet Union" is the third part of the book. It is an interview in a form of an essay with Colonel Žarko Popović. Since Popović traveled a great deal, held many high positions in Yugoslavia and abroad, and knew six languages, his essay contains a treasure of new information and a new insight about the Soviet Union and its policy toward Yugoslavia. His long meetings with Stalin and his advisors reveal Stalin's hesitation to take any concrete action to assist East European states in case of German aggression. For instance, during a meeting with the Yugoslav delegation he said: "We will not be involved in the war until we will be attacked". What will the Eastern people say? asked a Yugoslav delegate. Stalin angrily replied: "I do not care about the Eastern people, I am a Russian and lead Russian people". However,

only a few minutes later he said loudly: "Imagine, what power the unification of all slavs in one entity could produce? No one would dare to look at us askance" (p. 175).

On the whole *Na raskrsnici '41* is well-prepared book. Djordjević's effort is remarkable because he consulted all available sources and combined them with his own experience which gives a new insight to the problem of March 27, 1941. His writing is lucid and concise and his interpretation of events highly logical. *Na raskrsnici '41* is an important contribution to the Balkan historiography. All those interested in modern East European history, particularly the Balkans, will find it interesting and very informative.

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South Slavic Folk Culture: A Bibliography of Literature in English, German, and French on Bosnian-Herzegovinian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Montenegrin, and Serbian Folk Culture, compiled and edited by Klaus Roth and Gabriele Wolf with the co-operation of Tomislav Helebrant, Slavica Publishers, Columbus, Ohio, 1994, pp. 553.

The successful American publishing house Slavica Publishers has produced a bibliography relating to south Slavonic folk culture. The Munich *Institut für deutsche und vergleichende Volkskunde* undertook to compile and edit the entries. As the title states, the bibliography chiefly covers the area of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, FYROM, Montenegro, and Serbia. It also includes studies relating to neighbouring areas, as also to south Slavonic demographic groups and émigrés outside these countries. It is a bilingual English-German publication comprising monographs, collective works, and articles written in the three principal western languages, English, French, and German.

The bibliography comprises sixteen sections, each divided into the relevant subsections. It covers the following subjects: Balkan peoples, national and ethnic groups, regions and cultural areas, culture and cartography, folkloristics, ethnography, ethnology, anthropology, folk culture in general, material folk culture, social folk culture, folk religion, folk medicine, folklore in general, folk narrative, folk and epic songs, folk music, balkan studies, cultural and intellectual history, history, geography, place-names, itineraries, and travel reports. The bibliography contains a total of 7,654 titles.

It goes without saying that any attempt to compile a bibliography on any