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# Serbian Society at the Beginning of the 20th Century. "Militarization of the Everyday"[1]

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***Abstract.*** During the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Eastern question and the search for ways to solve it occupied a central place in the politics of both Russia and European states. The solution of this issue was closely linked with the process of formation of the young Balkan countries. The Formation of new statehood in Serbia typologically coincided with a change in the system of European international relations of the 19th and early 20th centuries, played an important role in the events of the Eastern question, while claiming to be the Yugoslav "Piemont." However, by the beginning of the 20th century, it was war that had become, both for Serbia and for the other countries of the region, not only a means of gaining state sovereignty, but also the main way to resolve its own interstate contradictions, which happened against the background of an external factor – the impact of the Great Powers on the political processes in the Balkans. These factors led to the natural militarization of the everyday life of Serbian society. The presence in the everyday consciousness of the image of a hostile "other" became one of the main ways to consolidate the country, when attitudes towards war, pushing the values of peaceful life to the background, created a special basic consensus in the state development of Serbia at the beginning of the 20th century, and the anthropological role of the military factor essentially influenced the underlying processes that took place in the country at the beginning of the 20th century. In the conditions of a new stage of destruction of the Balkans along ethno-political lines, the factor of the militarization of everyday life again becomes an important element of the historical policy of the Balkan countries and the construction of a "new past." In this regard, the understanding of many problems and possible scenarios for the development of the current Balkan reality is linked to this phenomenon. Thus, the study of the impact of special "extra-constitutional" institutions on the political life of Serbia at the beginning of the 20th century is important for a wide range of researchers, including for a systematic analysis of the crisis in the territory of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

***Keywords:*** Serbia, modernization, militarization of everyday life, "Inscription," First World War.

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Such complex and multidimensional historical events as wars are never caused by a single factor. Rather, they are the result of a myriad of circumstances, and over- or under-estimating even one of them can radically change our understanding of the past. When looking at the processes that brought about Serbian statehood in the 20th century, it is especially important to examine the complex of military factors that influenced these processes, as the country was involved in no fewer than six wars in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: in 1876, 1877–1878, and 1885, two Balkan Wars in 1912–1913, and the First World War in 1914–1918.

Conversations in Serbia about the country's participation in the First World War inevitably conjure up long-standing, often mythologized stereotypes that are deeply rooted in the collected memory of the Serbian people, united by the concept of "Serbian Golgotha." This refers to the heroic exodus of the Serbian Army through the Albanian mountains in the autumn and winter of 1915/1916, as well as to such well-known events as the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the battles of Cer and Kolubara in 1914, and the breach of the Macedonian Front in 1918." In historical memory, this heroism is superimposed on top of the general narrative about the collapse of four empires, the Russian Revolution of 1817, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, the Versailles system, and the formation of a new system of international relations.

In serious academic studies, the First World War is glorified as an unusually important phenomenon in world history whose consequences had a profound impact on the fates of the people of the European continent, and the "epic" or "heroic" depiction of its events, in turn, form a stable educational element in the formation of loyalty among the population (Vishnyakov, 2016). This is why such a conceptualization of the war, in which the depersonalized human masses act as the protagonist, is present not only in historical and political science works, but also in fiction and poetry about the War (Senyavskaya, 1999). What makes this "depersonalization" possible is the all-encompassing nature of the hostilities and the mass involvement of the population in the events both through the huge number of people conscripted from various social strata, and as a result of the growth of the global military industry and the emergence of new military technologies that radically changed the nature of warfare and turned the armed conflict into a massacre of the enemy's troops.

However, the study of world wars as a phenomenon is the study not only of the history of warring states and peoples, but also of the behaviour of everyday citizens whom, as the Serbian historian M. Jovanović puts it, literally everyone, and politicians in particular, urged "to die for the Motherland" (Jovanović, 2002). When broaching the subject of Serbia's participation in the First World War, historians tend to ignore both ordinary soldiers, on whose shoulders the main burden of the War fell, but also the civilian population, which was subjected to incredible suffering as a result of the military operations, evacuations, epidemics, and Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian terror. E.S. Senyavskaya is correct when she says that a "'man at war' is a special phenomenon, both social and psychological" (Senyavskaya, 1999: 8).

The "man at war" archetype played a special role in the formation of Serbian statehood, demonstrating how the "psychology of war" can become a catalyst for this process (Ponomareva, 2005: 40). The constant expectation of war created a special set of social values, and "the total nature of war was reflected in the collective and individual psychology" (Jovanović, 2002: 156). The government's use of the idea of the militarization of everyday life and the introduction of a hostile image of the "other" into the consciousness of the rural society became methods of consolidating the country. The attitudes to war created a special basic consensus in Serbia, pushing the values of peaceful life into the background. This phenomenon did not escape the attention of Russian eyewitnesses. "The bellicose mood of the Serbian people is not part of their natural character; rather, it is nurtured in them and, out of necessity, supported by external circumstances: their unfulfilled political role, the country's failure to establish territorial and political relations. This clearly hamstrings the country's development in terms of civic consciousness. Civil courage is not to be found anywhere alongside this militant heroism," noted Pavel Rovinsky on his impressions of Serbia after visiting the country in 1867 (Ponomareva, 2005: 109).[2] Half a century later, before the outbreak of the First Balkan War, the Russian diplomat Vasily Shtrandtman reported that the Serbs did not attempt to gentrify their capital, as they were sure that the buildings would be destroyed by the enemy, and that their future depended on "the wisdom of [their] politicians and the courage of [their] small army, those ten infantry and one cavalry divisions that will allow [them] to oppose countless enemy forces" (Shtrandtman, 2014: 116). These words are very much in line with the Senyavskaya's conclusions that "all the basic elements of the psychology of a person who finds themselves in the role of a combatant are formed even during peacetime, and war merely reveals them with the greatest certainty, accentuates certain qualities associated with wartime conditions. At the same time, the specificity of these conditions brings to life new qualities that cannot arise in times of peace, yet during war they appear in the shortest possible time" (Senyavskaya, 1999: 49).

At the beginning of the 20th century, this basic element of the psychology of Serbian society was a unique phenomenon: a close, sometimes inseparable interweaving of state, military and paramilitary structures, secret societies and private initiatives connected by the idea of uniting all Serbs in a single state. The Chetnik movement, as a path to the national ideal, acquired its finished forms, becoming a distinctive feature not only of Serbia, but also of the Balkans as a whole (the *comites* in the Bulgarian Army, and the *andarts* in the Greek Army). In turn, the leaders of the Chetnik detachments, many of whom were officers in the Serbian Army, formed a strong mechanism

[2] Pavel Rovinsky (1831–1916) was the greatest Slavic historian and philologist of his time. He spent the majority of his life in Montenegro, having moved to the country in 1879, initially of his own accord, and then as a dragoman of the Russian mission. One of his most significant works was the book *Montenegro: Past and Present,* which to this day remains the most comprehensive work on the history of the country.

that significantly influenced the country's political leanings.[3] In 1886, the Society of Saint Sava was founded in Belgrade and started publishing the *Brotherhood* journal, which was focused on educational and awareness building activities in Old Serbia and Macedonia. In 1902, a Chetnik organization appeared in Serbia, with S. Simić as one of its leaders. In Greece, the Ethniki Etaireia organization was engaged in similar activities, that is, not only propaganda, but also sending Greek volunteers to Macedonia and organizing armed detachments there from the local Greek population. According to R.P. Grishina, "the main thing that unites and characterizes the activities of such societies in the Balkans is their relationship with government structures in their homelands, and particularly with their armies, whose policies they were able to influence and eventually dominate" (Grishina, 2008: 158).

An important event in the political life of Serbia was the assassination of the ruling royal couple Alexander and Draga Obrenović on May 29, 1903, perpetrated by officers of the Belgrade garrison. Shortly before the overthrow of the Obrenovićs, the Slovene South organization was founded in Belgrade, formally as a student cultural and educational society to promote the unification of all South Slavic peoples. After the May Coup, the society bolstered its positions, intensifying its activities in Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina. One of the society's founders was Milan Pribićević, brother of the famous Serbian politician Svetozar Pribićević (who at the time was the editor of the Zagreb-based newspaper *Srbobran*, and would later go on to become leader of the Democratic Party and Minister of Internal Affairs of Yugoslavia during the interwar years. Other notable figures included Captain J. Nenadović, Lieutenant A. Srb, Colonel C. Popović, L. Jovanović (an associate of Serbian Prime Minister Nikola Pašić), Captain M. Naumović, L. Nešić (an official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Major M. Vasić, L. Jovanović-Ćupu (author of the organization's draft charter), and Dr. M. Gojevec, along with Simic, who was a prominent figure in the Serbian Chetnik movement in Macedonia and Old Serbia. A number of politicians with significant clout also had close contacts with the organization, including L. Davidović, J. Prodanović, L. Stojanović, Ž. Živanović, as did participants in the May Coup: General J. Atanaković, Major P. Pešić, Lieutenant J. Rafailović and Dragutin Dimitrijević (a.k.a. Apis).

On August 21, 1903, a large rally was held in Belgrade in support of the Serbian population in Old Serbia and Macedonia. It ended with the founding of the Kolo Srpskih Sestara ("Circle of Serbian Sisters") women's patriotic organization, led by Savka Subotić, Milica Dobrić and Nadežda Petrović.[4]

The Narodna Odbrana ("People's Defence") organization was created in Belgrade against the backdrop of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Annexation Crisis of 1908–1909, in order to have a Chetnik movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Narodna Odbrana

[3] For more detail, see (Vishnyakov ,1999; 2001; 2014; 2016; Pisarev 1990).

[4] Kolo is a Serbian folk (circle) dance. In this case, it is used to mean "association."

boasted as many as 5000 members and was divided into 223 chapters. It also enjoyed significant support from abroad. As the Serbian government was, under an agreement with Vienna, obliged to not only abandon support for the Chetnik movement, but also to actively suppress it, Narodna Odbrana was formally transformed into a cultural and educational society. In 1911, part of the officer corps – those who had taken part in the May Coup in 1903 – created a secret political organization with the catchy name Unification or Death, more commonly known as the Black Hand. The charismatic Dragutin Dimitrijević (a.k.a. Apis),[5] along with Vojislav Tankosić, C. Popović and L. Jovanović-Ćupu, sought to rally the people around them so that they could carry out these state and foreign policy tasks.[6] Several government officials had ties to the organization, including Minister of Foreign Affairs Milovan Milovanović. General Stepa Stepanović, who served as Minister of War in 1911–1912, was a puppet of the Black Hand.

Delving into the origins of the phenomenon allows us to clarify the reasons why the Balkans was transformed into a region of continuous war. The first manifestation of a distinctly "Chetnik" worldview in Serbian society came during the First Serbian Uprising of 1804–1813. After Serbia gained full sovereignty in 1878, the confrontational psychology of society, quite natural for a country at war, was reflected both in the features of the formation and development of its state and military institutions, and in its relations with its neighbours (Vishnyakov, Ponomareva, 2018).

Note that at the beginning of the 20th century, the process of building a modern army had progressed further than the changes being made to the country's traditional social structures. It is no coincidence that Prime Minister Nikola Pašić said at a meeting of the National Assembly: "Small states may, of course, bemoan the fact that one of the conditions for maintaining peace, according to the great powers, is military strength. But if this is so, then the small states should follow this basic principle: they must prepare for war if they wish to ensure peace."[7] This attitude made itself felt in the latter half of the 19th century, when the Serbian Army started to demonstrate its strength, including in the context of pursuing the foreign policy aspirations of the Principality of Serbia. For example, after the assassination of Prince Mihailo Obrenović III in 1868, the Minister of War, Milivoje Blaznavac, led a coup d'état to install Mihailo's 14-year-old nephew Milan Obrenović, who was studying in Paris at the time, as the new Prince of Serbia. "Blazvanac was a true Serb," wrote Rovinsky, "the people knew about his abuses, but loved his military exploits, dreaming that he would create such a force in Serbia that it would be able to defeat the whole of Turkey and recreate the kingdom of Stefan Dušan" (*Russians on Serbia* …, 2006: 77).

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[5] Dragutin Dimitrijević was born in 1876. After graduating from the Belgrade Military Academy, he became an officer of the General Staff of the Serbian Army. In the early 20th century, Apis, as he was known, played an exceptional and somewhat unique role in the Serbian Army and in Serbian politics, effectively serving as leader of the officer corps.

[6] The Black Hand had ties with the Mlada Bosna group of pan-Serb activists. Gavrilo Princip, the man who fatally shot Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, was a member of this organization.

[7] Russian State Archive of Military History. File 2000, Document 3035, sheet 467.

It should be stressed here that the nationalist movement in Serbia appeared long before the formation of civil society or any kind of constitutional order. In this connection, V.A. Shnirelman noted that "the struggle for national revival and the growth of nationalist movements that are now unfolding all over the world put a new item regarding the characteristics of nationalist ideologies and their practical implementation on the agenda. It is under these conditions that the ethno-historical myth acquired special significance, legitimizing the right of a particular group to the territory, to the development of its culture, and to the political structure, as far as demanding full sovereignty" (Shnirelman, 1999: 11). The "ethno-historical myth," closely connected with the process of national mobilization, was superimposed onto the formation and modernization of the political and economic foundations of the state, which took place in the latter half of the 19th century. Gaining independence naturally gave rise to another surge of "neo-Slavism" ideas among the country's new political elites, and the notion of the Serbian state as a Balkan "Piedmont" became a central issue of public life. A transition took place against this background, from a mythological to a reflexive type of social consciousness, and "the ethnocentrism underlying nationalism of any kind sought to fill the 'vacuum of consciousness' of individuals and social groups when it was impossible to rely on traditional spiritual values with the onset of a new industrial era" (Sergeyev, 2001: 173).

Thus, from the second half of the 19th century, the emphasis of nationalist sentiments started to be linked in the minds of the Serbian political elite with the tasks of state development, while the "desire to consolidate the idea of national unity in the centre of human imagination found expression in words and wars." (Burbank, Cooper, 2010: 326). Fascinated by this idea, political leaders attempted to create a myth that was understandable to society with the help of a system of beliefs, images and stereotypes to make it easier to indoctrinate people. As Max Weber noted, "Devotion to the charisma of the prophet, or the leader in war, or to the great demagogue in the ecclesia or in parliament, means that the leader is personally recognized as the innerly 'called' leader of men. Men do not obey him by virtue of tradition or statute, but because they believe in him" (Weber, 1990: 647).

The project of creating a mythical "great country" took on specific irredentist forms, creating a special semantic field in society and becoming a proven means of ideological influence on society for the political elite. The words of Benedict Anderson are fitting here: "… since the end of the 18th century nationalism has undergone a process of modulation and adaptation, according to different eras, political regimes, economies and social structures. The 'imagined community' has, as a result, spread out to every conceivable contemporary society" Anderson 2001: 175). As early as the end of 1844, the prominent Serbian politician Ilija Garašanin formulated the long-term *Načertanije* programme to liberate Serbian lands and united them around Belgrade. The programme envisioned the creation of a large Slavic State on the basis of the Principality of Serbia, with the territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and northern Albania being absorbed into the new state, and access to the Adriatic Sea

opening up. The Principality of Serbia would thus become a kind of Yugoslav "Piedmont."[8] This goal, which became the Principality's key policy, was largely reflected in the formation of the system of values of Serbian society, for which the question of "friend or foe" started to be closely linked with the desire to lead the process of creating a strong Yugoslav state in the Balkans.

As the historian L.V. Kuzmichyova noted, "the Serbs had a huge advantage in that they already had autonomy, their own political and cultural institutions and programmes. The core is there, so it can also play the role of Piedmont. Thus, the situation started to heat up not just after the quashing of the Serb uprising of 1848–1849, but after the all-European movement towards unification around a single centre of dispersed lands (Prussia, Italy). Serbia was the only real centre of Yugoslav unification" (Kuzmichyova, 2009: 176).

In 1866–1868, Belgrade was the base of the anti-Turkish forces. This led to an attempt to create a Balkan Union for joint action against the Ottoman Empire and the division amongst its members of the liberated lands of the Balkan Peninsula. Clandestine treaties were signed with Greece, Romania and Montenegro. Preparations for an offensive against Turkey were made in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and contacts were established with the Austrian Yugoslavs, in particular with the leader of the People's Party of Croatia Bishop Josip Strossmayer.[9]

However, attempts to implement the programme in the 1860s failed. This was not all down to specific historical conditions.[10] The main problem was that the Balkans has always been a polyethnic region, which makes it impossible to create the necessary conditions for implementing a programme to build a country on the principle of "people–territory–state," although this is precisely what Serbian leaders had aspired to since the beginning of the 19th century (Ponomareva, 2013: 83–85). This is also why the very concepts of "Serbism" and "Yugoslavism" were notional and vaguely formulated. After the events of 1875–1878, when dreams of creating a strong Yugoslav state under the auspices of Serbia failed, these ideas fell into a deep crisis that lasted until the 1890s.

The historian and political theorist Miroslav Hroch defined nationalism as "a position that puts national identity at the head of all other social interests and group affiliations (Hroch, 2010: 107) and identified three phased in the development of nationalist movements: Phase A – the careful study of the linguistic, cultural, social, and sometimes historical traits of a non-dominant group; Phase B – the emergence of activists who subsequently attempted to win over as many supporters as possible from among the representatives of their ethnic group in order to implement plans to create a future

[8] For more detail, see (Nikiferov, 2015).

[9] For more detail, see (Jakšić i Vojislav Vučković, 1963).

[10] One of the reasons the plans never came into fruition was the assassination of Prince Mihailo Obrenović III in Belgrade's Topciderski Park in the spring of 1868.

nation; and Phase C – when the movement itself comes into being (Hroch, 2002: 125). M.V. Belov believes that, in the case of Balkan nationalist movements, including the one that swept through Serbia, it is necessary to account for the fact these phases overlapped and did not follow the sequence proposed by Hroch. The movement, he writes, "is spasmodic in nature; tides of activity are followed by lulls and a return to an incomplete phase of development. This stop-start-return formula makes the rebel movement take on the appearance of a layer cake" (Belov, 2007: 530). The "stadial" picture of state development is Serbia is blurred somewhat, and the leaders of the emerging state, having adopted the external forms of West European socio-political doctrines, failed to grasp the fact that, as the political scientist Anthony D. Smith put it, "ethno-history is no sweetshop in which nationalists may 'pick and mix'; it sets limits to any selective appropriation by providing a distinctive context and pattern of events, personages and processes, and by establishing frameworks, symbolic and institutional, within which further ethnic developments take place"

It furnishes a specific but complete heritage which cannot be dismembered and then served up *à la carte*" (Smith 2004: 94–95). The words of the renowned American journalist John Reed, who made a trip to Serbia in 1915, support this conclusion. The captain of the Serbian Army who accompanied him said: "Before we volunteered for *comitadji* service, we were sent to the universities in Berlin and Vienna to study the organization of revolutions, particularly the Italian *Risorgimento*" (Reed, 1928: 98). This shows that the mentality of the Serbian elite, including the military leaders, absorbed the political doctrines of national idealism of the 19th century, along with the theory of violence – an important area of the Russian populist school.[11]

Another important fact that contributed to the militarization of everyday life in Serbia was the patriarchal nature of society, its homogeneity and agrarian character, based on the traditions of a specific social structure called *zadruga*.[12] By the turn of the 20th century, the structure of Serbian *zadruga* had started to change from a family entity to a production cooperative which became the basis of the country's economy,[13] and had a key impact on the nature and characteristics of the development during this period. Serbian traditions were also reflected in the formation of the country's armed forces. The military reforms carried out in the second half of the 19th century by (king from 1882) Prince Milan Obrenović made the Serbian Army look like its

[11] The influence of the ideas of Russian Narodniks on the development of the revolutionary movement in the Balkans is brilliantly demonstrated in the works of the Serbian historian Latinka Perović. See, for example (Perović 1993).

[12] A *zadruga* is essentially a large patriarchal family consisting of 20–30 people. This would typically be several sons of the same father living with their families on the same land. Rovinsky described it thus: "A family of 10–12 people, no more, including children lived here (I'm not counting the priest), but the yard adjacent to theirs belonged to the same family: it is one yard that has recently been divided into two. Two more families that used to live here have settled a little farther away. As many as 30 souls lived together here before the land was divided up, and they each constituted one family community, with a chosen leader, an elder, and common property, and who lived and worked together, obeying the orders of the family council alone" (*Russians on Serbia*…, 2006: 97).

[13] The first cooperative agricultural *zadruga* was founded in March 1894 (Vukićević, 1915: 26).

European counterparts, but had a different semantic meaning. Compared to their European counterparts, Serbian soldiers approached military service differently, they had a completely different way of thinking. This can be put down to the fact that, for them, the observance of military discipline was superimposed on the Chetnik consciousness of the peasant, the "former rebel." The famous Russian military historian Evegny Martynov wrote, "Under such conditions, there is no distinct line Army between officer and soldier in the Serbian, which is something you will always find in the armies of other states; the relationship between them is very simple, almost comradely (Russians on Serbia… 2006: 559). John Reed was more specific: "In Serbia the silly tradition that familiarity between officers and men destroys discipline apparently does not exist. Many times in restaurants we noted a private or non-commissioned officer approach a table where officers sat, salute stiffy, and then shake hands all around and sit down. And here the sergeant who waited on table took his place between us to drink his coffee and was formally introduced "(Reed, 1928: 82). Serbian soldiers, therefore, did not have a European military bearing. They were not trained dogs who unquestioningly carried out the orders of their commanding officers. In November 1914, an infantry major said in an interview with a correspondent for the Russian newspaper *Rech*, "We Serbs don't know the meaning of the phrase 'to back down.' It's true! And this is our undoing. For us, war is a never-ending, never-tiring onslaught. Then we fight like lions. Then we are great! Then no enemy can defeat our soldiers! But if we need to command our fighters to retreat, to move a few metres back, then that's it! We've lost! We become disorganized, get rattled, angry with everyone and everything; we turn into capricious, helpless children and start to despair about the fate of the entire army!" (Vukićević, 1915: 83). Rovinsky also gave a figurative of the Serbian soldier: "I have never come across a soldier who are more cheerful, more diligent than a Serbian soldier. It is as if life had disciplined him; he is a soldier because he wants to be, it is his vocation. Thus, free and rebellious out of rank, the Serb becomes unconditionally submissive once you get him to fall in line (*Russians on Serbia*…, 2006: 77). The words of the Russian scholar and preeminent expert on Serbia and the Balkans echo the conclusions drawn by the military correspondent for the *Ranee Utro* ("Early Morning") newspaper, N.I. Gasfeld, who was sent on assignment to the theatre of operations of the First Balkan War and published his notes under the name N. Chevalier: "The Serbian soldier is amazingly undemanding: thin foot wraps on his feet that do not keep water out, dressed in God knows what when called up from the reserve, a duffle bag at his side and a gun over his shoulder, he shuffles unperturbed through the terrible mud of the Macedonian roads, caring not about fatigue or hardship" (Chevalier, 1913: 85). This amazing ability to meekly endure any hardship was noted by another observer of the First Balkan War, I. Taburno: "I see an elderly soldier who is barely able to move his legs, his face is covered in blood, unable to go any further. He's already walked around three kilometres. He sits down. We leave the crew. The doctor examines him and shakes his head in surprise. A bullet had entered through his forehead and exited through the back of his head. They

sent for a stretcher. They placed him on the stretcher, and the second he threw his head back, death came. Not a single groan came from the lips of this most patient man!" the Russian war correspondent wrote with admiration (Taburno, 1913: 48–49).

This internal semantic feature of the Serbian armed forces manifested itself most clearly in the First World War, when the Serbian army inflicted a number of demoralizing defeats on the Austrians in 1914, ousting them from the Principality. Note that these victories were not solely the result of military tactics or prowess, as the homogeneity of the patriarchal society also played a vital role. Colonel Subotić, head of the Red Cross in Niš, explained this to John Reed thus: "We are all peasants in Serbia – this is our pride. Voyvoda Putnik, commander-in-chief of the army, is a poor man; his father was a peasant. Voyvoda Michitch [Mišić], who won the great battle that hurled the Austrian army from our country, is a peasant. Many of the deputies to the Skouptchina, our parliament, are peasants who sit there in peasant dress" [Reed: 59]. The people of Serbia had a fundamentally different view of the war compared to the people of the other warring countries. Reed continued, emphasizing that "Every peasant soldier knows what he is fighting for. When he was a baby, his mother greeted him, 'Hail, little avenger of Kossovo [sic]!'" (Reed, 1928: 66).

The description given by Russian envoy Grigory Trubetskoi of the trip made by the aging King Peter to the trenches in November 1914, at the height of the Austrian offensive, which almost ended in tragic defeat for the Serbs, is also telling: "'All sorts of tales are told about me,' he said to me. 'Don't believe them. I have done nothing special. You see that I am old and useless. It's hardly surprising that I would rather die than see my homeland disgraced. I went to the trenches, and this is exactly what I told the soldiers. I told them "Anyone who wants to go home, you are free to do so, but I will stay here and die for Serbia." If only you'd seen our soldiers! What extraordinary people they are. They cried, kissed my coat. Everyone stayed, and they all fought like lions. When eyes are upon them, Serbs can perform miraculous feats of courage'" (Trubetskoi, 1983: 77).[14] The way the Serbian people saw their monarch – as a member of the family – was a natural expression of the attitude of the traditional peasant society to power and the state, when the ruler came from among their own ranks and would be mythologized as such. This is why members of foreign dynasties have never sat upon the Serbian throne.[15] At the same time, the attitude of the Serbian peasantry to their monarch reflected the traditional mentality of the people. Reed noted that the driver during his trip to Serbia told him he had named his stallion Voyvoda Michitch [Živojin Mišić] as a sign of respect for the general who won decisive battles against

[14] The courageous behaviour of King Peter I of Serbia, who, according to the Russian envoy, "led by the example that he would prefer death to public disgrace" did not go unnoticed in Russia. Tsar Nicholas II awarded him the Order of St. Andrew with swords; Alexander, the heir to the throne, was awarded the Order of St. George (third class), and his brother Georgy was awarded the Order of St. George (fourth class).

[15] For more detail, see (Shemyakin, 2005; Belov, 2005; 2006; 2007).

the Austrians in 1914, and the *mare* [italics added by the author) he called King Peter (Reed 1928: 104). No hardship could change this attitude among Serbian soldiers. Trubetskoi offers a prime example of this in his description of the Serbian Army's stay in Scutari during its retreat to Corfu in 1915: "Like pale shadows – many could barely stand upright – the poor fellows wandered the streets, and not once did I encounter a disgruntled mumbling. With an astonishing resignation to fate, these people died slowly, not daring to reach out for alms […] Not so long ago, these soldiers were all prosperous Serbian peasants, and now they had nothing. And, having fallen into the most extreme poverty, they seemed stunned and did not know what to do" (Trubetskoi, 1983: 219).

The situation in Russia was radically different. The Russian general and military historian Yuri Danilov noted that in 1914, after the announcement of mobilization, the peasants, who, like in Serbia, constituted the basis of the Russian Army, "went to war because they were used to doing everything the authorities demanded, patiently and passively bearing their cross until the great trials came […] There was not a sense of unity among the native Russian population, even subconsciously. 'We are Vyatka, Tula, Perm, the Germans will never make it here' – these words often and, I must say, quite correctly, sum up the unconscious attitude of the peasantry to the danger the state was in" (Danilov, 1924: 112). And this, even though the peasants feverishly supported Nicholas II, and despite the upsurge in patriotism among them. Trubetskoi echoed these words in his memoirs: "It was hard on everyone, no one wanted to go. Almost no one grasped the sad fact that war was necessary ("we are Kaluga, we don't need the sea"). But they all meekly dropped what they were doing and went off to war… What inspired them to do this? Patriotism? In some cases, yes, but they were few and far between. The people went because they felt that they had to. And what was the real, physical force compelling them to do this? Two or three constables per parish, which were usually huge! If, even for a moment, the people were to wake up from this mass hypnosis of power and the feeling that they needed to do as they were told, then that power would no longer have a hold over them, and the complex structure of the state building would crumble to dust" (*The Trubetskoi Princes,* 1996: 159). The failures on the Russian–German front in 1915–1916 strengthened these sentiments, which, coupled with other important factors, made the crisis of the Russian monarchy inevitable.

Any study of Serbian history must necessarily take into account that the Westernization of the country, which began in earnest after 1878, did not affect the traditional social structures in the country, and real, especially state, life in Serbia, as the testimonies of Russian travellers and diplomats, among other things, demonstrate, was vastly different from the generally accepted behavioural norms and socio-cultural standards of Europe. The well-known Serbian historian Latinka Perović noted in this regard that "Serbian modernization is identified with the Europeanization of Serbia […] Zadruga, with its economic and social functions and value system, underlies the ideology of Serbian socialism of the 1960s and 1970s, or the radicalism of the 1980s. The quintessence of this ideology is the people's state as opposed to the modern state,

which introduces the rule of law, establishes institutions and creates an administrative class – namely, the bureaucracy" (Perović, 2007: 19, 28). Another prominent Serbian historian, M. Jovanović wrote about a deep external rupture between a small part of the Serbian intelligentsia and the patriarchal peasantry. Summing up the devastating consequences of the First World War for Serbia, Jovanović pointed not only to the huge losses of human life, but also to the fact that the War introduced ordinary Serbs to the elementary achievements of world civilization. For Serbian soldiers, it marked the first time that they had seen a toothbrush or a thermometer, and "Serbian peasants who had gone to war and taken part in the Great Retreat through Albania were able to watch amateur theatre performances on the Macedonian front or in the theatres of the Bizerte, which included a production of 'The Battle of Kosovo,' and listen to the opera *Cavalleria Rusticana.* They could also take in an amateur performance of the Chinese ballet. On the Macedonian front, they went to the pictures. They were being acquainted with a new civilization which, like it or not, had been brought to them by the War" (Jovanović, 2002: 153–154).[16]

Thus, the "man at war" has become a very special phenomenon for Serbia, both social and psychological. This collective military portrait of the Serb influenced all the modernization processes that unfolded in the Serbian state after 1878. According to Leon Trotsky, who visited Serbia as a correspondent for the *Kievskaya Mysl* newspaper, "The trumpeters and trumpeting, the drummers are drumming […] Bast shoes on their feet and green twigs in their hats – in full combat equipment – give the soldiers a pathetic look. And nothing sums up the bloody senselessness of war today as vividly as these twigs and peasant sandals" (*Russians on Serbia* …, 2006: 500)".

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[16] See the collection *The First World War in the Literature and Culture of the Western and Southern Slavs (First World War* (2004), which talks about impact that the War had on the mindset of the Balkan peoples.

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