

## VLADIMIR JOVANOVIĆ ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF SERBIAN SOCIETY IN HIS "MEMORIES"

*UDC 316:929 Jovanović V.*

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**Abstract.** *In his "Memories" ["Uspomene"], a memoir book that had remained unpublished until relatively recently (1988), Vladimir Jovanović, in the opinion of the author of this paper, created a unique representation of the transformation of the Serbian society in the second half of the 20th century. As an intellectual involved in politics (he participated in the well-known session of the St. Andrea Assembly in 1885), and as a politician among intellectuals, Jovanović developed his socio-political and socio-historical views by considering the "folk forces and virtues" to be the key factors of social transformation and of achieving national goals, but also critically evaluated the often pernicious impact of foreign influence. Despite being open to modern ideas, above all those emerging in the West, this liberal patriot, as he referred to himself and to others holding similar views, Jovanović had no grudge against traditional national values. Quite the contrary - he thought of them as the "corner-stone of Serbian power and skill".*

**Key words:** *Vladimir Jovanović, historical sociologist, political sociologist, social changes, Serbian society.*

Memoir books can be valuable testimonies to historical eras, social states, the role of various individuals in important events – in a word, they constitute a precious source of data for a holistic evaluation of the past and understanding of the events and the era in which such books were written. Many people who would have much to say actually do not write memoirs at all, but valuable memoirs can be written only by those who were agents of social events, whose memoir books are valuable for the posterity and who have not only a strong will but also the skill and passion necessary to commit their views of the past and of their own participation in it to paper. The lesser the possibility on the part of the author to publish his memoirs in his lifetime, the greater – one can dare presume – their objectivity, because in the latter case they are not written for the sake of the present and of personal material welfare, but for the sake of somebody else and the future.

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It is believed with full right that it is historians, literary writers and historians of literature who can profit most from memoir books, as it is they who can find out a lot from them. Along the same lines, memoir books can also be relevant for sociologists<sup>1</sup> in their efforts to reconstruct the past of a given society, to uncover the foundations on which it rested, as well as the mechanisms of its functioning. Balzac is often said to be the best French sociologist of the 18th century, although he was, of course, no sociologist in the strict academic sense. There are memoir book writers who can be considered greater sociologists even than Balzac, precisely because they relied on their own memories relating to various events and individuals, which, no matter how unreliable they may be, are not the product of mere literary imagination. Therefore, the moral responsibility of a memoir book writer in relation to what he has written is greater than that of a literary writer.

Together with Mateja Nenadović and Simeon Pišćević, Vladimir Jovanović is among the few Serbian authors of memoir books who wrote about the more recent periods of Serbian history. While Simeon Pišćević wrote in an inspired way about the Serbs to the north of the Sava River, about the wars they waged and their migrations in the second half of the 18th century, and while Mateja Nenadović (in his *Memoirs*) wrote about the events at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, Vladimir Jovanović in his *Memories (Uspomene)*<sup>2</sup> wrote about the events taking place in the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century.

Jovanović probably wrote his *Memories* before the First World War, and relied thereby both on his own recollections of various events and on the extensive written material he possessed. He probably completed his writing at the end of the war, but the manuscript was not used as a valid historiographic material, and remained relatively unknown till 1988, when it was published<sup>3</sup>. There is no doubt that Slobodan Jovanović<sup>4</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> In the *Introduction* to his book entitled *The Youth and its Literature (1848—1871)*, Jovan Skerlić wrote that in the given book "he did not talk about the representatives of the youth science: the philosopher Alimpije Vasiljević, the historian Panta Srećković, the sociologist Vladimir Jovanović" (p. XIII). Skerlić found Jovanović to be primarily a sociologist, rather than a politician or an economist, as he is mostly classified in some encyclopedias. However, Skerlić was not the first one to consider Jovanović a sociologist. The first one to have done so was Laza Kostić, who wrote that "the most prominent participants in youth assemblies in Vojvodina were the Šumadijans", especially "the sociologist Vladimir Jovanović" and "the socialist Svetozar Marković" (see: J. Skerlić, *ibid.*, the new corrected version edited by Vladimir Čorović, Izdavačka knjižarnica Napredak, Beograd, 1925, 106).

<sup>2</sup> V. Jovanović, BIGZ, Beograd 1988, edited and with an introduction by Vasilije Krešić, PhD. In the subsequent text the given book will be referred to only by citing a page number.

<sup>3</sup> In a culture lacking memoir books, it strikes one as strange that Jovanović's *Memories* should have stayed unpublished and unknown for almost seventy years. If one can find an answer to that in the period after 1945 and the political destiny of Jovanović's son Slobodan, it is difficult to understand why the manuscript had not been published before that. The answer here may lie in Jovanović's views of some prominent historical figures, who were his contemporaries and acquaintances. The point of greatest divergence between Jovanović's views and those commonly taken by historians is Ilija Garašanin, who Jovanović described in his *Memories* neither as a nationalist nor as a patriot, but merely as a man thirsty for power, contrary to the way he is portrayed by official history (see p. 254). It is up to historians to ascertain whether Jovanović's unfavourable views of some prominent figures are a result of personal animosity he had for them or whether such views have sound historical basis.

<sup>4</sup> Skerlić wrote his book *The Youth and Its Literature (1848—1871)* consulting archived materials but also "the participants and the very leaders of the national movement" and it is precisely Vladimir Jovanović's name that is mentioned first in such a context. Having done so, Skerlić then proceeds to thank those people on the "favour they had done to the history of Serbian literature and of Serbian spiritual development" (*ibid.*, XIV). And this is not sheer courtesy. Much before he wrote his *Memories*, Vladimir Jovanović he had been extensively interviewed by Skerlić on his participation not only in the work of the United Serbian Youth but also on the purpose of his stays abroad. Much of what he told Skerlić would be elaborated upon in greater detail in *Memories*.

Vladimir's son, was acquainted with the manuscript, especially in view of the fact that it especially dealt with that period of the reign of the Obrenović dynasty that S. Jovanović also wrote most about. Unfortunately, parts of *Memories* have been lost, so that one can presume that their author also had important things to say about Serbian history after 1903, although at that time he was not any more a prominent agent of political and social events but a mere observer with huge life and political experience.

## I

According to the author of *Memories*, the 19th century was fruitful for the Serbian nation, especially that part of it that lived in Serbia. Whereas previously many people had emigrated from Serbia, the situation changed when Serbia became a semi-independent principality after the Second Serbian Uprising, when it started to attract immigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Old Serbia, Macedonia and the neighbouring Serbian provinces. In only five years – from 1815 to 1820, its population doubled. In Jovanović's words, that nationally homogenous but culturally heterogenous immigrant population, helped Serbia achieve "a higher degree of cultural power which marked the 19th century in Serbia not only as the century of its liberation but also as the one of the rise of its culture and creative potential" (22).

Jovanović wrote about Serbia's history pertaining to the period of the uprisings mostly on the basis of what he had heard from his parents. As a child, he may have been able to remember some of the leaders of the uprising (who had grown old by then), but vividly recalled the way of life in a society getting liberated, i.e. getting reborn. At that period, people found out about the events from their past from the players of the "gusle" (a one string musical instrument) during the fairs around churches and monasteries. The concepts of what one's rights and duties were – were acquired in patriarchal cooperatives, and the heroes of the First and the Second Serbian Uprising, together with the priests and other clergymen, acted as educators. Those who taught at that period possessed neither great education nor authority, and the greatest skill they had actually pertained to sharpening goose feathers and selling them to their pupils. As far as economic virtues were concerned, diligence and economizing were appreciated most, and were encouraged at home by the family. The influence of one's family started to lose its grip when "people started trading" (30), i.e. when people started to establish links with the already modernized Europe. It was in this that Jovanović succinctly identified the beginning of the modernization of Serbia's society that heralded the end of the patriarchy.

Jovanović became a witness to the creation of social changes and an agent of political events in 1858, when he became a member of the St. Andrea Assembly. As a 25-year-old man, he became an assistant to Jevrem Grujuć, who was a liberal and one of the two secretaries of the Assembly. While being involved in administrative work, he learned about the nature of politics and running the state. He belonged to that stream within the Assembly that helped the Obrenović dynasty enter the stage of history, where it would remain for a little less than a half of a century, when it made its tragic exit from it in 1903.

It was a period of major political change, characterized primarily, as Jovanović observed, by the fact that the Turkish oppression was substituted by the despotism of the Obrenović dynasty. The despotism, in turn, sparked political unrest that led to dynastic clashes and civil wars. Young Vladimir soon realized that things could easily go from bad

to worse when there subsequently emerged clashes between the supporters of the Obrenović dynasty, on the one hand, and of Vučić, on the other hand. These clashes resulted in the substitution of the Obrenović's despotism by Vučić's systematic suppression of any expression of free thought. Fortunately, such a state of affairs did not last for long. As the author of the *Memories* observed, despite being bullies and tyrants in their own country, Vučić's supporters were more than ready to crawl at the feet of those who were more powerful than they were.

At the beginning of its transformation into a modern state, the ruling apparatus in Serbia, in which hardly anyone dealt with anything else but agriculture and husbandry, was comprized of "Schwaben" and the "Šumadijans". The former were the Serbs who had immigrated from Vojvodina, who wanted to apply Austrian laws and create institutions and ways of organization based on those in Austria. It soon became obvious that that could lead to nothing else but making Šumadija or "Servia" "wild rather than civilized" (73). The "Schwaben" attempted to make the principality subservient to Vienna, whereas, as far as domestic politics was concerned, they wanted to make Serbia a police state. They imposed extremely strict laws and created Machiavellian institutions designed to destroy their political enemies. Jovanović had made no comment on whether such acting on the part of the "Schwaben" stemmed from their own beliefs or whether they had been instructed to do so by somebody else, and left it to the readers of his work to pass their own judgment on the issue.

At the same time, however, the principality started to create its own administrative capacity, comprized of the so-called "Šumadijans", who were sent to schools in Germany, and later on to Paris, wherefore they were also known as the "Parisians". They brought back to Serbia the seeds of unrest, and the democratic, nationalist and revolutionary ideas incited by the events of 1848 in Europe. The Parisians were considered to lack not only experience in running the state but also political experience in general, and some thought that the ideas they spread among the young not only in the principality but in the other South-Slavic regions as well might jeopardize the very existence of Serbia.

But, according to Jovanović, despite the problems that could be expected to appear in a newly established state, in the 19th century Serbia managed "to first transform from a Turkish pashaluk into a semi-independent principality, and then still into an independent state and kingdom. In the given period, during the wars some of which it won and some of which it lost, Serbia managed to liberate the South Slavs and secure their future unification within a single state." (17). Naturally, such enormous political changes were followed by social ones.

Just as Montesquieu did when he wrote about the Romans, Jovanović also found the driving factor behind those changes to be the virtues of the people who actually carried out the social and national transformation. The major virtue of Serbs in that period was bravery, which in turn, spawned other virtues. It is logical that no other means could at that time be found out of enslavement, no matter how much some other means could be valid. But bravery alone was not enough when it came to leading the Serbian nation through subsequent historical mazes. What was also needed was being well versed in political leadership so as for the strength and the greatness of the nation to be able to come through. According to Jovanović, the challenges that were encountered and the sheer human toll that had to be paid in the process, had taught the Serbs to adjust to any given historical context and to pave the road towards the realization of national goals through persevering and brave acts, the vision of the future and the faith in divine justice and in the nation itself.

The main assumption of Jovanović's historical sociology, only briefly mentioned in his *Memories*, is that it is not enough only to scientifically research events and deeds, but also to gain self-knowledge in the process, "to figure out which events assisted national progress and augmented national power, and under which circumstances those events did so, on the one hand, and what actions actually brought about national decline." (17). Jovanović's very extensive work, however, is incomparably more important when it comes to its documentary merit for political and constitutional history of Serbia, than when it comes to the reconstruction of social changes, because Jovanović wrote about that aspect of the Serbian society he knew well, i.e. he did not shed light on the society of the Principality and then Kingdom of Serbia in its entirety. This is a natural result of the fact that he belonged to the upper social class, was a scientist, a professor, a newspaper editor, a patriotic political worker who spent much of his life in Switzerland, France, England, Italy and Austria-Hungary. But even during the time he spent in Serbia itself, he, in his own words, rarely came into touch with the rural Serbia, which accounted for 90% of Serbia's population, only 1/5 of which was literate.

Jovanović did not meet ordinary people nor write about them, except at the beginning of the *Memories* and at the start of his career, when he wrote about the time he was the manager of agricultural and husbandry farms in Topčider and about how a Czech, using Jovanović's own ideas, made a plough which was much better than the previous ones. However, his recollections of rural Serbia were indirect, mostly coming down from his parents, when Serbia was merely beginning its transformation provoked by resistance to Turkish rule, which soon resulted in people living mostly in one refuge or another, which "crushed Serbian military power just like war battles"<sup>5</sup>.

Despite the fact that he was removed from the ordinary people and had no direct and frequent communication with them (if we are to trust the *Memories*), in the way he thought, Jovanović could not possibly belong more to the Serbian nation, and believe that liberation of Serbia would show the strength and greatness of its people, which was a common topic in his theoretical writings.

## II

Due to the Assembly of St. Andrea, and the liberals in it, Miloš Obrenović returned to Serbia and once again became its leader. Being thankful for that, Miloš and Prince Mihailo told the liberal patriots that what they had done for the "people's cause and people's dynasty" would never be forgotten, which might actually have been said sincerely at the time. But politics has its own logic, which can sometimes be very cruel, so that the Obrenovići did not manage to honour their promise. As it often happens in politics, those who had opposed the dynasty,

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<sup>5</sup> Both when they were written and when they were published, Jovanović's *Memories* did not draw too much attention because it seemed that the state of the Serbian nation had much improved in the meantime and that its key problems had all been solved. However, the historical events that have taken place since 1988 have made Jovanović's memoir book very much relevant today. The Serbian national question, that Jovanović wrote extensively about, has once again become unsolved. Serbia has once again become an independent state with almost the same borders as when Jovanović was one of its first ministers of finance. Even the refugees are back, with a difference that the refugee crises has now lasted for far too long, and that people now, rather than seeking refuge in the woods from the Turks, fill in the so-called "collective centres".

had, according to Jovanović, in the meantime managed to put on masks behind which they could work against not only the politicians who had helped the Obrenović dynasty, but also against the liberal ideas of their opponents, all the time presenting themselves as faithful servants of one Obrenović or another. They did not find that difficult because both Miloš and Mihailo had a disposition to rule autocratically.

But it was not only the former opponents of the Obrenović dynasty that tried to suppress liberal ideas; this was also done by the Austrian consul and the Turkish Pasha, whereas the Russian consul kept reminding Miloš that he had to have a tight grip on everything going on in the country. Despite the fact the Principality of Serbia was subjugated to the Turkish Porta, it was no less independent of the other major powers – Austria and Russia in particular. That seems to be the destiny of small states and nations, which serve as mere arenas of the political clashes of the great powers, so that such states turn out to be dependent even when they are formally not, which also affects their societies.

Therefore, there is nothing odd in the fact that Miloš, who had never been close to liberal ideas in any way, had to push the liberals away from himself despite their merit in his coming to power, because he believed that they could threaten his despotic rule. This was done with an assistance of a political group for which money represented the greatest ideal and supreme quality, as opposed to the liberals who ascribed the same importance to liberty and justice. This anational and antiliberal group accused the liberals of trying to make Serbia republic, which is, of course, considered to be a serious crime in any monarchy.

When Mihailo assumed power after Miloš's death, he promised not only to remedy the injustices his father had done but also to consider no one above the law. Naturally, such promises also turned out to be in vain, despite the fact that they were definitely not a product of political hypocrisy. A sociological and historical analysis might be able to establish the reasons for such a state of affairs. Such reasons may also be found in the external pressure to keep the Serbian society deprived of freedom, rather than in the lack of the tradition of freedom and the rule of law.

### III

As a boy and as a young man, Vladimir Jovanović found two things confusing. The first was the fact that it was the Porta itself that supported those Serbs who wanted to topple Miloš Obrenović. The second was an equally puzzling fact that Christian Europe, and especially England, fervently supported a cruel and inhuman Turkish rule over Christian Balkan nations. That question – how it is possible that civilized countries and their governments approve of and even assist the uncivilized ways of ruling – has, in a sense, remained important for the Serbs to this day. Vladimir Jovanović would get an answer to the second question while he was in England, after several conversations he had with a few prominent Englishmen, most of whom were MPs. The answers Jovanović obtained from them are important because they can at least partly shed light on the ways the global politics was created and the way that affected small and weak states.

It is well-known that any political action can be explained by interests, if it cannot be justified on moral grounds. This was valid then, and still is. However, it remains unclear how interests, whatever they happen to be, can possibly justify the cruelest of barbarities, i.e. how was it possible that the great powers, in order for them to preserve the status quo

in Europe, did not not allow the subjugated Christian peoples to at least slightly improve their unfavourable condition. To make things worse, the English Prime Minister at the time was Benjamin Disraeli, who was not a "clean-cut" politician but a literary writer.

The preservation of the status quo in the Balkans and of the European equilibrium meant that Russia should not be allowed to get closer to Eastern Christians, as that would mean their exchanging one master for another. Some English politicians sympathizing with the Serbian cause, such as William Gladstone, the Minister of Finance, told Jovanović that they, as members of the highest English institutions, could not possibly attack the policy of European equilibrium. Jovanović was also told that Serbia should not provoke Europe in any way precisely because of Europe's fear that that would lead to Serbia's exchanging Turkish rule for that of Russia.

This interesting line of thought later on saw a change when England started to slowly give up on its position regarding the Ottoman Empire. This was best illustrated by Richard Cobden, an English MP, who said that with every bullet that killed a Russian soldier, England lost a valuable customer of its products, whereas Turks were bad customers and debtors because they spent money unreasonably and were slow to pay off their debts. The above-mentioned conversation convinced Jovanović that "it would take a long time before England, with regard to the 'Eastern Question', stopped supporting the Turks and adopted a more humane policy" (122). What one could expect most from England at that time was for it not to intervene contrary to the interests of the eastern Christians, having in mind thereby its interests with Russia. And that, in turn, meant that the policy of the great powers was not driven by humanism despite its proclaimed goals.

Still, from the given conversations Jovanović could conclude that the days of the English Turkophiles were numbered, and that the Christian peoples in the Balkans could actually expect success in their struggle for freedom and justice, as he used to say. Therefore he considered the liberals right in their view that one of them should go to England with an aim of pointing out to the English politicians what the interests of the Serbs and of the other eastern Christians were. Eventually, it was Jovanović himself who was chosen to do that, and he considered he was relatively successful in that mission.

Jovanović realized that politics was indeed a pragmatic national discipline when he met Lajos Kossuth and Ferenc Deák. The political views of the given prominent Hungarian figures at the time, as Jovanović's conversations he had with each of them separately, showed, proved to have almost nothing in common, apart from the standpoint they adopted that the Serbs in Vojvodina should have only civil rights and not the guaranteed privileges.

#### IV

As a liberal, Jovanović critically evaluated Serbia and its government from the liberal point of view. When he was once summoned to Prince Mihailo, he even insisted on the liberal ideas and assumptions being implemented in Serbia. The answer he obtained from this ruler, who had to attend to all kinds of practical problems on a daily basis, seemed to show the prince understood of the issue. Still, he explained to Jovanović why a liberal government was impossible in Serbia. The fact that it was easiest for a ruler to rule using Machiavellian methods, Jovanović was told, was actually one of the less important reasons for that. The prince also metaphorically showed that he did not oppose freedom of

press, but that he also thought it necessary to first create a solid and well founded building (i.e. to organize the state well) before proceeding to crown it with freedom of press, just like a church, as he put it, was crowned by a golden cross once it was completed. The prince also thought that the people of Serbia were not ready for self-government, and that the number of intellectuals in Serbia amounted twelve people in total, all of whom he then listed by name, including his own and Jovanović's name thereby. Still, no matter how much respect Jovanović showed for what Prince Mihailo had to say, he disagreed with the way the issue itself was presented, because it implied that it could not possibly be solved (just as one could not solve the issue of what came first – the chicken or the egg). It is dangerous, Jovanović thought, if a nation was considered incapable of being free, i.e. if no attempt was made to introduce at least bits of freedom in the foundations of a state.

Jovanović's stay in Switzerland helped him compare the Swiss and the Serbian society. He concluded that Switzerland had no natural advantages over Serbia, but that it had achieved a level of freedom that Serbs could only envy. He also wrote extensively about the institutional measures taken in Switzerland with an aim of realizing and safe-guarding the various types of freedom there.

But this comparison of Western countries governed by the rule of law did not necessarily present Serbia in bad terms. Through his conversation with foreign politicians Jovanović learned that Serbia, unlike western countries, was directly involved in the struggle against barbarians from Asia, whereas France, on the other hand, was only involved in the struggle against domestic Caesarism. Therefore, Jovanović was told, Serbia could possibly expect no help from the Caesarism that tolerated no freedom and justice in its own yard. At yet another occasion, Jovanović was told that the Serbs knew nothing about the class division of citizens into privileged and unprivileged classes. "The equality of rights and duties preached by the French democrats is an ideal that may be achieved in the future. It has, however, already been achieved by the Serbs in the process of their liberation. In that sense, they constitute a living example even for the great nations, that still have to fight for the 'rights of men' " (260). Jovanović's interlocutors here clearly referred to the ramifications of the firm standpoint adopted by Prince Mihailo that the break away from servitude to the Ottoman Empire also meant a break with the feudal social relations, abolition of feuds themselves and the liberation of peasants of their feudal duties.

## V

In his memoirs Jovanović kept using the phrase *liberal patriots*, which points to two key virtues he and those like-minded upheld in politics. When Jovanović wrote about liberation, he always had in mind two things – getting rid of the foreign occupation forces as well as getting rid of the domestic despotic rule. It is liberty, he thought, that the Serbs lacked and craved, because they lived in a semi-independent state, while parts of the Serbian nation outside Serbia lacked liberty even more. The Serbs, Jovanović concluded, therefore had a natural urge to get free by taking resolute action in that direction, and in that way solve the Serbian question as a part of the solution of the Eastern Question. On the basis of his conversation with the Italian revolutionary Mazzini, Jovanović thought that that was not possible to do in the triangle defined by Turkey, Russia and Austria, but that it could be achieved through Serbia's participation in the military action of Prussia



and Italy against Austria. Jovanović was always disgruntled by the fact that Prince Mihailo had dismissed the scenario believing that Austria would actually win such a war, which never happened. Therefore, there was nothing much that Serbia could look forward to for staying loyal to the Habsburg Empire, when the empire got defeated in the wars for the unification of Italy and Germany in 1859 and 1866, during which Serbia remained neutral. Instead of solving its greatest problem – national liberation and unification, something that the Italians and the Germans had just achieved, Serbia had realized only a minor goal – the fact that the Turkish garrisons left Serbian cities.

As, in Jovanović's opinion, Serbia had missed the opportunity to ally with Italy and Prussia and realize national liberation and unification, there then emerged the need for the sound Serbian patriotism to distance itself from the inactivity of the government in Belgrade and show to the world that it was not giving up on its historical call and was not letting go of the control over its destiny. Serbs in the various parts of the region had to be made to gather together, and get engaged in the common cause, which was made all the more difficult because of the various state borders and the dynastic barrier when it came to Montenegro.

Jovanović cultivated the idea of brotherly solidarity among all those who called themselves Serbs and spoke Serbian. He especially wanted to make the youth accept the idea<sup>6</sup>, and educated youth in particular, as it was to bear the brunt of social life and coexistence of three different faiths in four different countries of the divided Serbian nation.<sup>7</sup> It was on this basis the *United Serbian Youth* was formed. Its first assembly was held in Novi Sad in 1866; the second one was supposed to be held in Belgrade in 1867, but Prince Mihailo's government ordered the police not to allow that, as it thought this movement dangerous for its power and position. The movement would continue to exist for a period of time in Hungary, and was then suppressed by the Hungarian government as it deemed it an obstacle in its policy of oppression of the non-Hungarian peoples.

But before the two states agreed to obliterate the movement, there had appeared within it a clash because of the appearance of the 'new fighters', as Jovanović ironically named the socialists. The small state of Serbia now saw a clash of the major European

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<sup>6</sup> According to Skerlić, Vladimir Jovanović considered "the entire Serbian nation to be a member of the Youth" (*ibid.*, 121). Skerlić also said: "The theoreticians of the Youth tried to systematize their 'confused ideas'. That job has been undertaken by Vladimir Jovanović, who, contradictorily enough, was at the same time an advocate of the Western ideas on liberalism and democracy". (*ibid.*, 169–170).

<sup>7</sup> In his book *The Youth and its Literature*, Jovan Skerlić gave an interesting observation about the main purpose of the United Serbian Youth and of similar organizations from abroad the USY looked up to: "The Youth was in the habit of considering the national ideal above ancient panslavism, and 'Serbiandom' above Orthodoxy. As opposed to the Middle Ages, when faith was a matter of state politics, in the 18th century and on it became substituted by the principle of belonging to a nation. Just as states used to be created on the basis of the same faith people shared, in the 19th century that tended to be done on the basis of national unity. The Youth followed Dositej's ideas, and thought that faith did not really matter as long as people belonged to the same nation. Faced with the fact that a half of the Serbian nation belonged to the Catholic church and Islam, the Youth considered it important to push faith-related questions to the background. In this and in many other similar cases, it followed the *Young Germany* that followed the following Heine's thought: 'Without state religion, Germany would be unified and powerful... Regarding religious matters as not primary in importance might be the only way for us to get saved and for Germany to gain political power' (*ibid.*, 207). Today, approximately 150 years later, it is obvious that the relation among the faith, the nation and the state has been quite differently established in Germany and in the Balkans, despite Heine's views as the common starting point. The Balkan solution ended up tragically in the Yugoslav wars of the last decade of the 20th century.

ideologies, including the socialist one. Jovanović had met its protagonists during his stay in Zurich, where Serbian students visited him, then inspired by liberal ideas. In the meantime, they had transformed into socialists, and were led by Svetozar Marković.

In Jovanović's opinion, the socialists focussed too much on criticizing the dynasty instead of focussing on the struggle for liberty and justice. In his conversations with them, Jovanović endeavoured to point out to them that in Serbia at that time there was no point in waving the socialist banner because in Serbia there was no such relation between work and capital as that found in the developed industrialized countries, nor that Serbia faced any of the social problems Western European countries experienced, wherefore it made more sense to struggle for national liberation and unification rather than make divisions among Serbian intellectuals still meagre in number. Being opponents of the Obrenović dynasty, the socialists thought Serbia would be better off with the Austrian dynasty at its top, because common people would have less affinity with it which in turn would make Austria disintegrate sooner. The socialists lured the young people into their socialist-utopian labyrinth, pointing out that the liberal party had completed its progressive mission and that it was they – the socialists, who should now rise to power. Jovanović attempted to point to the inner contradictions in the socialist ideas, so as to show that they actually cancelled one another<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Today (where the word *today* partly implies *sub speciei aeternitatis*), any attempt to contrast the views of V. Jovanović and S. Marković, even if only in a footnote, would show that the clash between them was a result not only of the different ideological standpoints the two men adopted, but also of their different world views. Jovanović approached the position of the Serbian nation from a metaphysical point of view, and was all too ready to idealize its values. He believed that the Serbs were "innately" democratic, that they were led by liberty and justice towards the future, and that national liberation was the priority. Svetozar Marković, on the other hand, was a positivist. He questioned even the very possibility of existence of the values his opponent advocated.

The two not only had different ideological views but also different social positions. Jovanović was a man of the dynasty, and even when he was its minister, he criticized the dynasty bitterly, and was exiled for a period of time. Marković was an antimonarchist, a revolutionary and a republican who in the articles he wrote criticized the liberals and the dynasty and "everything and anyone that had to do anything with either of them" (S. Marković, *Sabrani spisi* [Collected Works] 2, Kultura, Beograd, 1965, 81). All the remaining citations in this footnote come from the given book. He thought that in the Serbian nation there were no democratic concepts that had any importance or tradition, so that this nation's faith in its rulers was naive (108). The nation was instructed to uphold the dynasty, but no measures were taken to stop the creation of an ever larger gap between the proletariat and the rich (110). Marković thought that a royal government could not possibly be liberal, nor that it would give its people any freedom unless the very people "wrestled it out of the ruler's hands", and told Jovanović that "the one who wants both liberty and freedom either lies or does not know what he is talking about" (111). Marković opposed the monarchy so fiercely that he said that he would consider it the greatest misfortune in Serbian history "if we got liberated while the Obrenović dynasty was still in power" (134), and he found it all the same "if Serbia was ruled by an Obrenović, or by Nikola Petrović, or by Franz Josef. Marković also said that he and his opponent had attended different schools so that their opinions also differ wherefore "Jovanović did not see any working class in Serbia and called my struggle for the interests of the working class in Serbia don-quixotic" (133).

The views of Svetozar Marković are unusual, and even superficial, especially when it comes to religious issues, despite the fact that he blamed Jovanović for total lack of understanding of religion. He disagreed with Jovanović's view that the Serbian people had accepted the important truth of Christianity and said that the important Christian truth was adopted only by the "Quakers and other religious sects in America and Europe". (122). Serbian monasteries were in his opinion legacies of kings and gentlemen, that the people admire "failing to see thereby that it was the ordinary people who had had to pay for it all". Marković also claimed that the Orthodox church more than the Catholic one "had political power in the Serbian nation" and that the relation between the people and the church was the same as that between the ruler and those who are subjected to him" (122).

In addition, Jovanović held the view that the United Serbian Youth was no political disaster despite the short time period in which it existed and the way it came to an abrupt end. Quite the contrary - the uprising in Herzegovina and Bosnia in 1875, the war waged by Serbia and Montenegro for liberation and unification in the period between 1876 and 1878, as well as the success in the Balkan wars in 1912 and 1913, and the patriotic fervour behind all of them, were a result precisely of the ideas of the United Serbian Youth. "It is a historical fact that our national liberation and unification was achieved due to the nation's sound democratic national consciousness, which was systematically cultivated by the United Serbian Youth" (277). Later on, the United Serbian Youth was outlawed in Hungary as well, and the Serbian socialists transformed into radicals. Understandably enough, Jovanović had favourable opinion about such a transformation.

## VI

While writing *Memories*, Jovanović created a valuable portrait of the transformation of the Serbian society during the second half of the 19th century, although that was naturally not his primary goal. The portrait he gave presents various important inner motives and the external agents of social change. The inner motives were often the direct opposite of the external factors. *Memories* point to folk forces and virtues, as the driving force behind the achievement of national goals, as well as to the dependence of social change within a state on external influence. That external / foreign influence is often difficult, though not perfectly useless, to try and counter by inner folk virtues and endeavours.

The Principality and then the Kingdom of Serbia invested all its efforts and human potential into the realization of its liberation. Its international status depended on Turkey, its political enemy, Russia, its political ally, as well as on Austria-Hungary with its territorial demands in the Balkans, and turkophile England. Serbia was "invisibly" run by the Porta and Vienna; as far as Russia was concerned, it helped the liberation of Serbia from the Turks, but in the Treaty of San Stefan it actually showed that it was Bulgaria's mother and Serbia's step-mother, as it wholeheartedly gave the newly liberated ethnic Serbian territories to Bulgaria. It came as no surprise then that Serbian authorities, in such a historical context, were not dedicated enough to enhancing liberty and justice, the key values of liberal patriots and their social ideal.

A period of fifty years of Serbian history is filled with liberation wars, assassinations of rulers (Prince Mihailo, King Alexander), and party strife, often used as a substitute for the previous clandestine resistance to the Turks. Constitutions got changed or were abolished and reinstated at the whim of the ruler. That made Jovanović remark that "the power of the ruler lies in his respect for the constitution, and the power of the constitution

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The debate between Jovanović and Marković reflected the conflict of the two "world" ideologies, that seem to have been imported too soon into still patriarchal Serbia, that was still not completely liberated and was still quite homogenous as far as class divisions were concerned. This debate harbingered similar future debates that continue to this day. Some historical periods seemed to prove Jovanović right, with some others proving him wrong and making Marković appear right. It is an established fact, however, that Marković has not only been read but also praised, whereas Jovanović has mostly been ignored despite the fact one can say nothing against his insistence on liberty and justice as social ideals. Marković is not read too much today, whereas Jovanović's works are hard to find, as the first (and the only) edition of his works can be obtained only in several libraries.

in the consciousness about national unity and the power of the people and the state" (455). And that did not happen, Jovanović complained, because the liberal ideas had not been put into practice. And they had not been put into practice because the domestic rule and foreign power had not allowed that to happen.

In Jovanović's words, Serbia at that time was "a mere toy in the hands of foreign schemers". One of the proofs of that was the fact that Serbia's autocratic ruler Mihailo found it difficult to realize his own decree which stated that Serbia should obtain 60,000 guns from Russia, both because of resistance from abroad and from within Serbia (see p. 231—232). Yet another proof was the fact that one of the reasons the Kingdom (rather than the Principality) of Serbia lost the war with Bulgaria in 1885 was that its war plans were made by a "military attaché" who had a vested interest for Serbia to start and lose that war (see p. 473). As he knew personally all the rulers from the Obrenović dynasty as well as the most prominent political figures at the time, Jovanović was in a position not only to see the actions taken by those people and the traits of their personal character but also the "mechanisms" of ruling itself. He tried to see both what politics could do and what it could not. In that sense, it turned out that what politics was suited to best was scheming, whereas it was next to powerless when it came to the realization of the highest values – freedom and liberty.

What is missing in Jovanović's memoirs is a representation of everyday life of ordinary people, except for that part in which he talks about his childhood. He also did not write about the life of the higher social layers. Jovanović must have been familiar with it, but he obviously found any type of scheming apart from that pertaining to politics – uninteresting. On the other hand, what he wrote most about was the hidden "courtly" side of social life, in which area it was what we might call the development of ideas that concerned him most. He was interested in how ideas were formed, what their primary values were, how those values got materialized within the ruling systems of thought and then transformed into forms of rule and state administration.

If Jovanović had been a sociologist (as Skerlić and many others think he was), then his *Memoirs* are memoirs of a sociologist, or, to be more precise, of a political or historical sociologist. These were at the same time the reference points from which the given author selected his memories that constitute the major achievement of his work. In that sense, it seems that one could without great difficulty transform Jovanović's political and historical sociology from the form the memoirs into discursive form.

But Vladimir Jovanović had not only scientific but also practical political ambition. He was not a pragmatic politician who spent all his energy and skill for the sake of coming into power, but an intellectual involved in politics and a politician among intellectuals. Therefore, what he cared more in politics were ideas and the cultivation of firm beliefs rather than getting into and holding an important post in the society. It was probably because of that reason that his political and scientific career were characterized by changing luck. As far as ideas were concerned, he introduced, advocated and defended them, but was also the one who dealt with them synthetically and syncretically<sup>9</sup>. He never considered the national and the general human aspects to be in collision, as people would do in the times to come.

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<sup>9</sup> Pointing Jovanović's being prone to syncretism, Andrija Stojković concluded that Jovanović "held a series of ideological views that are unsustainable on logical and theoretical grounds, especially when taken syncretically, but that in the social life of the given transition era they had to coexist". Then this author adds that "it was not Jovanović in particular who had come to such eclectic confusion but some other positivists of that time" (Andrija Stojković, *Philosophical Views of Vladimir Jovanović*, Matica Srpska, Novi Sad, 1972, 13).

As a liberal patriot (as he, we will remind the reader, used to call himself and those who were like-minded), he was an opponent to conservatism, as it perpetuated the status quo, which in the case of Serbia would mean perpetuation of the unfavourable national state. Despite being open to the ideas coming from the West, he always felt close to the traditional Serbian values and regarded them as the "base of Serbian strength and greatness". He regarded liberty and justice, the values he firmly held on to throughout his life, as both national and universal, and as both traditional and modern.

It is paradoxical that Jovanović's memoirs, while still unpublished, were paid no attention to. They gained importance when they were eventually published. And they were made important by history itself, which had in the meantime made a full circle as far as the Serbian nation is concerned. The Serbian national question, which appeared to have been solved for good in 1918, has become unsolved again. Serbia once again became an independent state, which this time happened more because of the actions of others than of Serbia itself. When compared to Switzerland now, Serbia still possesses respectable natural wealth and resources, but the difference in the ways the two states are organized seems to have remained as radical as it was the case in Jovanović's time. For that reason, Jovanović's *Memories*, to use Cicero's words, can be said to be "the witness of the time, the light of the truth, the life of a memory, the teacher of life, the harbinger of times gone by"<sup>10</sup>. They were all of these things, and especially the last one.

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## VLADIMIR JOVANOVIĆ O PREOBRAŽAJIMA SRPSKOG DRUŠTVA U SVOJIM USPOMENAMA

Ljubinko Milosavljević

*Vladimir Jovanović je u svojim Uspomenama, memoarskom štivu objavljenom tek 1988. godine, po autoru ovog rada, stvorio osobenu sliku preobražaja srpskog društva tokom druge polovine 19. veka. Intelktualac u političkim poslovima, u koje je bio uključen još od Svetoandrejske skupštine 1885. godine, ali i političar među intelektualcima, Jovanović je stvarao svoje sociološko-političke i sociološko-istorijske poglede tako što je glavnim činiocima društvenih preobražaja smatrao "narodne sile i vrline" kojima se ostvaruju nacionalni ciljevi, ali pri tom nije previđao ni opaku moć stranih uticaja. Otvoren za moderne ideje, pre svega za one koje su se rađale na Zapadu, ovaj liberalni patriota, kako je nazivao sebe i svoje bliskomišljenike, nije osećao nikakvu odbojnost prema tradicionalnim nacionalnim vrednostima, naprotiv, smatrao ih je "osnovom snage i veštine srpske".*

Ključne reči: *Vladimir Jovanović, sociolog istorije, sociolog politike, društvene promene, srpsko društvo.*

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<sup>10</sup> *Historia est testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis.*