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PART I

THE SOUTH SLAVIC MOVEMENT AND THE FOUNDING OF THE YUGOSLAV STATE (1878 TO 1918)

1.

The South Slavic Countries around 1900: The Dawn of a New Century

At the turn of the century, optimism prevailed throughout the entire South Slavic region. Even in very remote corners like the provincial Bosnian town of Višegrad, wrote the town's chronicler Ivo Andrić, "events too quickened their pace. . . . Exciting news was no longer something rare and unusual but an everyday food and a real need. The whole of life seemed to be hastening somewhere, suddenly speeded up, as a freshet quickens its pace before it breaks into rapids, rushes over steep rocks and becomes a cascade."¹ However, at this point only a few people were aware that they were living in an era of millenarian changes and that intellectual innovation and political impetus were also emerging from profound social upheavals. In any case, the young Bosnian revolutionary Vladimir Gaćinović hoped that the old feudal system, the major clans, and the patriarchal mindset of his home would soon belong to the past and that new ideas and a strong push to create a nation state would emerge.² Since large areas of the countryside still remained mired in dire poverty and old traditions, the idea of integrating all South Slavs into a single state appeared to be no more than a pipe dream in the eyes of many people. At the time it was not evident, let alone certain, that one day their so very dissimilar regions would indeed merge into a single body politic. It quickly becomes clear just how complicated the starting point truly was when we retrospectively comb the historical regions of Yugoslavia in fast motion.

The Historical Regions

At the turn of the century, Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes were living in two empires—the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman—and in two independent nation states—Serbia and Montenegro. Therefore, our fictional trip through the South Slavic countries around 1900 begins in the Austrian crown lands of Carniola, Styria, Carinthia, Gorizia, Istria, and then moves to Trieste, the home to approximately 1.32 million Slovenes, who would become the smallest

population located the farthest west in what would later be the multinational state of Yugoslavia. In Trieste they made up about three-fourths of the population and lived in confluence with Germans, Italians, Croats, and other peoples. They were the only group among the South Slavs never to have suffered longer phases of military threat, wartime destruction, or even depopulation. Their agriculture was varied and productive, and the standard of living and level of education were higher here than in the neighboring regions. The architecture reflected nearly 500 years of Habsburg rule and still today seems quintessentially Austrian. The areas in which Slovenes lived were still split into different administrative jurisdictions, but even in the past there had never been a state entity named Slovenia.³

Further west and south, the Slovenian regions passed seamlessly into the settlement areas of the approximately 2.9 million Croats, who were also part of Austria-Hungary.⁴ The Croats exemplified internal fragmentation to an even greater degree than the Slovenes. They were dispersed throughout no less than seven separate political-territorial units within the Habsburg monarchy, each with very different socioeconomic structures, ethnic mixes, and cultural influences. Croatia-Slavonia enjoyed autonomy within the Hungarian half of the empire. Istria and Dalmatia, however, were under direct Austrian rule, whereas the port city of Fiume (Rijeka), as a *corpus separatum*, was governed by Hungary. Croats also lived in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in southern Hungary. Until the outbreak of the First World War, not a single railway connection existed between Croatia, Dalmatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁵

Highly diverse cultural influences intermingled in Croatian regions. In the cities of northern and eastern Croatia, such as Zagreb, Varaždin, and Osijek, the Austrian and southern German influences are still evident today in the baroque style of aristocratic residences and the old town centers and in the interiors of city palaces and patrician homes. Along the coast, in Dalmatia and Istria, the architecture in cities like Pula, Split, and Dubrovnik points to ancient origins as well as to the centuries-long and very close ties to the cultures and histories of Venice, Florence, and Rome.⁶

Since 1881, Croatia-Slavonia also had included the former Military Frontier (*krajina*), a province under special military administration that existed for 400 years. This area extended along the Sava and Danube rivers before reaching the Adriatic coast farther south in western Bosnia. In order to shield its empire militarily from the “Turkish peril,” Vienna had settled Serb refugees and others as free soldier-peasants in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and created an administrative district with its own social order. These “frontiersmen” formed military regiments to defend the monarchy.⁷ The Habsburgs had also attracted non-Slavic colonists to the area, including German-speaking Danube Swabians.

Beyond the Military Frontier lay Bosnia-Herzegovina. The 1878 Congress of Berlin had placed it under Austro-Hungarian military occupation, while formally leaving it under the administration of the Ottomans, who had ruled there since the fifteenth century. In 1908, the Austrian emperor annexed it in a surprise move, thereby also incorporating into the empire the autochthonous Muslim population. Around 1900, the South Slavic population totaled about 1.6 million, of which 43 percent were Orthodox Christian, 35 percent Muslim, 21 percent Roman Catholic, and the rest a combination of Jews, Vlachs, Turks, Roma, and other minorities.

The first thing to stand out in this newly annexed territory was the architectural mastery of the Turkish builders. Sarajevo dazzled visitors with the magnificence of the Gazi Husrev-beg Mosque, one of the largest and most artistic religious buildings left by Islam on European soil. Also world famous was the bold sweep of the stone bridge over the Drina in Višegrad, which, according to its inscription, could be found “nowhere else in the world.”⁸ Built in the fifteenth century on orders of the Grand Vizier Mehmed Paša Sokolović, a child of the region, this remnant of East–West interlock was immortalized by Ivo Andrić in his Nobel Prize–winning novel.⁹ And then there is the Drina River itself. Originally the Turks and Austrians declared it to be the dividing line between their empires; later, in the twentieth century, it became a highly contested site of memory. Was the picturesque river the supportive backbone of Serb settlement beyond the political borders of Serbia or was it the insurmountable watershed between Catholic and Orthodox civilizations? For their part, the communists later summarily declared the Drina to be a symbol of Yugoslav unity.

Under Austro-Hungarian rule, all of Bosnia-Herzegovina was exposed to central European architectural influences. Sarajevo received a modern city center with representational administrative buildings, a theater, and a central post office right next to the Turkish old town with its bazaar—the *Baščaršija*—numerous mosques, hammams, Koran schools, dervish monasteries, and caravansaries.¹⁰ In the late nineteenth century, the traveler Heinrich Renner wrote: “looks more Turkish here than in Sofia and Philippopolis; the regional costume still prevails; turban and fez are preferred,” despite the already “prevalent” European clothing.¹¹

Travel was very strenuous at the time. The trip by coach, caravan, or horse from Sarajevo to Mostar, located about 84 miles away, lasted three grueling days. To venture into more remote regions, a person either used one of the hazardous horse trails or walked.¹² Therefore, from eastern Bosnia it took a difficult climb through the mountains to reach Montenegro, which had been independent since 1878. For centuries, the seclusion of the Karst had conserved the traditional clan order. The overwhelming majority of the

Montenegrin population were Orthodox Slavs, but a few thousand Turkish, Albanian, and Slavic Muslims also lived there. This tiny country with its population of about 200,000 always captured the imagination of foreign visitors, in particular, as a symbol for the irrepressible will of a small mountain people to be free; as the homeland of banditry, blood feuds, and barbarism; and not least as the stage for comical political conditions. Except for a small idyllic strip of coastline, the living conditions here were merciless. The country had almost no infrastructure, what cattle-raising and meager farming there was yielded little, and indescribable poverty prevailed. Deep in the interior, explained the Montenegrin Milovan Djilas, a close collaborator of Tito, this land was “extremely barren and crippling quiet,” a place where “all things living and all things created by the human hand” vanished. “There is no oak, no white or copper beach, just dry, brittle, barely green grass. . . . Everything is stone.”¹³

Crossing the jagged mountains on the arduous zigzag of a Turkish road, the traveler reached the southernmost point of what would later be Yugoslav territory, namely the harbor of Bar, and a few miles farther inland, Lake Skadar, through which the Albanian border would run one day. Along this narrow coastline, the Mediterranean-Venetian flair returned. For centuries this area served as the most important and often the only link to western Europe.

Beyond Lake Skadar stretched those regions of the future Yugoslavia that belonged to the Ottoman Empire until 1912/1913 and were considered particularly backward and poor. The administrative district (*vilayet*) of Kosovo, created in 1879 with the capital city of Üsküb (Skopje), included a greater part of today’s Kosovo and Macedonia, over which Greece, Bulgaria, and the new nation state of Serbia have fought. More than 1.6 million inhabitants created a unique ethnic and religious mixture. The population was fairly evenly divided between Christians and Muslims and was split into numerous language groups.

At the time, special status was given to the primarily Muslim-inhabited administrative district Sanjak of Novi Pazar, which separated Serbia from Montenegro. In 1878, the Congress of Berlin conceded to the Austrian emperor the right to occupy the strategically important area. In 1913, it was divided up between Montenegro and Serbia.

The Principality of Serbia gained de facto semi-independence from the Ottoman Empire as a result of two uprisings (1804–1813 and 1815–1817). Autonomy was legally granted in 1830, and independence was internationally recognized in 1878. In 1900, 2.5 million people lived here, of whom nine-tenths were Serbs and the rest Vlachs, Roma, and other diverse groups.¹⁴ Another two million or so Serbs lived in the Habsburg monarchy. In the north, at the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers, stood the originally oriental-Balkan capital city of Belgrade, which for most of its long history had

served as a strategically significant border town, military post, administrative city, and trade center. After the Ottomans left, it was completely reconstructed in the Western style typical of Vienna and Pest. From here it was just a small jump to the southern Hungarian province of Vojvodina, from which the Serb national movement had emerged during the Enlightenment. As a result of the Austro-Hungarian colonization, the population of 1.3 million then consisted of Magyars (32 percent), Serbs (29 percent), Germans (23 percent), and numerous other nationalities such as Croats, Romanians, and Ruthenians.¹⁵

Peoples, Nations, Identities

At the turn of the century, around twelve million people lived in the historic regions of the future Yugoslavia. The majority were South Slavs of Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim faiths, and the rest created a conglomerate of various other ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups, including Turks, Albanians, Germans, Magyars, Jews, Roma, Vlachs, and others.

Local intellectuals and writers, like so many other Europeans of the nineteenth century, believed that communities needed to be organized as “nations” to secure political participation, cultural rights, and social justice. Nationhood was mainly understood as a cultural and linguistic category out of which the proponents of nationalism thought to create an organic whole. Yet, in most regions, the composition of the population was confusing, to put it mildly. Over the course of decades, an elaborate history of migratory movements from various places, religious conversions, and different kinds of cultural hybridization had thoroughly and repeatedly jumbled and reset the pieces of the ethnic mosaic. For this reason, contacts, cultural transfers, and cultural interweaving on various levels always played a major role.

Around 1900, the idea of a “Yugoslav” nation was as obscure as was a well-defined notion of what it meant to call oneself “Slovene,” “Croat,” or “Serb.” For peasants, their local communities, language, culture, and religion were the references important to their world. Granted, the process of modern nation building had indeed begun during the first third of the nineteenth century, and new and abstract forms of national awareness were emerging from the identities previously shaped by religion, cultural heritage, and regional affiliation. However, at this point none of the future Yugoslav peoples had yet formed an integrated community. The emergence of the modern nation involved protracted, often contradictory processes with a thoroughly open-ended result. The idea of a transhistorical existence of peoples, objectified by language, culture, or origin, is still popular today. Yet it is an idea that is totally inapplicable historically.

Stated simply, the majority of people living at the turn of the century in the areas that would later be Yugoslavia were South Slavs, linked by their language and cultural kinship. According to today’s categories, these were

Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Bosnian Muslims, Montenegrins, and Macedonians. According to the identification categories back then, these labels still oscillated between ethnic, national, religious, and regional connotations, which would contribute significantly to the problem of a future Yugoslavia, as will be shown here.

Despite the extreme disparities among the political territories and cultural histories, Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim South Slavs all felt intuitively related. The reason was that they could communicate freely with one another. Most Croats and all Serbs, Montenegrins, and Bosnians speak the same dialect, known as Štokavian (after the interrogative pronoun *što* for “what”).¹⁶ The nineteenth-century language reformers selected this dialect in 1850 in the Vienna (Literary) Agreement to serve as the basis of a standardized Serbo-Croatian language.¹⁷ The idioms of the Slovenes and the Macedonians were distinctly different and would later develop into their own literary languages. Since the early nineteenth century, intellectuals and societal elites thought that it would be possible to create (or rather revive) a united South Slavic nation based on a shared descent, language, and culture. They believed that South Slavs were a primordial and transhistorical people who had suffered the unfortunate fate of having been unnaturally torn apart. Their subsequent fragmentation into Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was considered superficial, which meant that it was possible and imperative that the South Slavic people reemerge as a single “Yugoslav” nation despite their present cultural and political differences.

The protagonists of the South Slavic idea were aided in their effort by a degree of conceptual vagueness: in this context, the vocabulary of local languages contained just the word *narod*, a word that made no semantic distinction between “people” and “nation.” Herein lay a creatively exploitable but also dangerous ambivalence. At the same time, the language lacked a term for that common idiom referred to then as “Slavic,” “Croatian,” “Serbian,” “Bosnian,” or simply “*naški*” (our language). There was no conceptual equivalent to a label like “German” or “French” that would have vaulted local and regional variations, nor was there a common collective term for the advocates of South Slavic unity and thus no “positive predisposition” for South Slavic (Yugoslav) nation building.¹⁸

In all of the regions mentioned here, forms of linguistically and culturally determined awareness that could be called protonational existed already in the late nineteenth century.¹⁹ People identified themselves with certain groups that distinguished them from other communities by way of various factors like culture and language, sometimes also religion, social milieu, and regional origin. In each case, the respective environment determined which of these criteria stood at the forefront of such self-identification, as the following example of Croatia illustrates.

If a person traveling through Croatian regions at the turn of the century had asked peasants about their national affiliation, this individual would have been given a variety of answers.²⁰ People were already identifying themselves as “Croats,” but sometimes the label was used to mean ethnicity and other times to mean regional affiliation. At the same time, people identified themselves—depending on where they lived—as “Slavonian” or “Dalmatian” or “Istrian.” “The work of unifying the Croats has not yet been completed,” complained the Croat scholar Julije Benešić in 1911. “The lads from Sylvania are still ashamed to call themselves Croats publicly.”²¹

People intuitively considered the Slavic language to be an important identity marker as long as they lived among Germans, Hungarians, or Italians and a clear language barrier existed. Only then did people identify themselves primarily as “Slav” or “Croat.” In multireligious milieus in which the language was homogenous, such as in Bosnia or Slovenia, faith became the main identity marker. Since a Croat could communicate in the same dialect as Serbs, Montenegrins, and Bosnians, the language criterion alone was not enough to define who a Croat was. A Croat peasant saw himself primarily as “Catholic,” “Christian,” or as a “Latin.”²² However, the Croatian national identity and Catholicism were not yet identical; after all, Germans, Austrians, Italians, and Magyars were also Catholic. Not until much later, in the 1920s, would the activities of the Catholic clergy and the Peasants’ Party complete the integration of the Croatian nation under the recitals of Catholicism.

Unlike Catholicism, the Orthodox Christian Church was already a strong factor in creating the national identification and integration of the Serbs. There was a historical reason for this. During the Ottoman period, the religious communities were organized as quasi-legal entities with certain autonomous rights. These so-called millets had great administrative powers. The Orthodox Church could appoint church dignitaries and manage the property of the churches, monasteries, and charity institutions. Family and inheritance law as well as tax collection was also put in their hands. For an interim, the Turks granted the Serbian Orthodox Church sovereignty (autocephaly) to be exerted by the patriarch in Peć in Kosovo. The Serbian church thus became the sole guardian of the extinct medieval tradition of state. Serbian kings were worshiped as saints; hagiographic texts were evocative of the golden age and its demise; bishops acted as both spiritual and political leaders. Therefore, “Orthodox” was equivalent to “Serbian” both semantically and in meaning even before the nationalist period. Toward the end of the 1880s, the Serb geographer Vladimir Karić noted that, for the Serb, “it is very important to call himself ‘Christian,’ or more precisely, ‘Orthodox,’ and he even goes as far as not to distinguish between the faith and his nationality, so that he calls it the ‘Serbian faith’ and consequently wants to call every person a ‘Serb,’ regardless the ethnicity, if this person is Orthodox.”²³ Because of their Orthodox

religion, many Montenegrins understood themselves to be Serbs at the time. After all, both peoples had sprouted from the same ethnic soil of the medieval Serbian state, and these common origins and the shared religion are what exacerbated the split between them, the impact of which is felt still today, particularly in the hesitancy to affirm the existence of the Montenegrin nation. The merger of “Orthodox” and “Serbian” remained intact in many regions until the 1930s. Only later in the twentieth century did the religious meaning disappear, and “Serbian,” like “Montenegrin,” was recoded to fit into separate national categories.

Unique in European history has been the identity building of Bosnian Muslims.²⁴ These people are the descendants of those Slavs of Orthodox, Catholic, and other faiths who converted—usually voluntarily—to Islam when the Ottomans conquered the territory. The motives for converting were manifold and may well have resulted from a mixture of fear and incentive. Non-Muslims were confronted with fewer chances to advance, a greater tax burden, and legal discrimination in matters such as property ownership. Conversion to Islam occurred especially in places where the Christian churches had not yet firmly established themselves or competed fiercely among themselves for power and influence. Upon conversion to Islam, old folk customs were simply recast into new molds. Occasionally entire families split into a Muslim and a Christian branch, which served as a type of reinsurance to protect themselves should power shift again into other hands.²⁵ Outside of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slavs in Serbia, Sandžak, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Macedonia also converted to Islam.

Islam was the decisive criterion separating Muslims from the others in Bosnia. It formed social identity, defined norms and values, and prescribed religious and cultural practices.²⁶ At the turn of the century, the collective identity of the Bosnian Muslims was still primarily influenced by religion. They fought for religious and cultural autonomy, not national and political sovereignty. Only a minority argued for the secularization of the Muslim community in the modern era, meaning the separation of religion and civil society. However, a nonreligious, national consciousness did not consolidate until well into the twentieth century.

In Serbia, Kosovo, and Macedonia, all of which still belonged to the Ottoman Empire, the confusion was the greatest, and national identity building had advanced the least. In the proverbial Macedonian fruit bowl (in French, *macédoine*) lived both Slavic- and Greek-speaking Christians, Turkish- and Albanian-speaking Muslims, Jews, Vlachs, and Roma. How large each of the communities actually was became the subject of heated ethnographic and political controversies.²⁷

According to traditional Islamic order, religion took precedence over ethnic distinctions. Therefore, Slavs and Greeks living in the Orthodox millet found it

especially important to identify themselves as “Christian” vis-à-vis the ruling Turks. Not until the second half of the nineteenth century during a conflict within the Bulgarian church did the overarching Christian Orthodox community divide along linguistic lines into Bulgarian, Greek, and Serb sectors. It would still take several decades before people understood this new differentiation, let alone internalize it. Slavic-speaking peasants of Macedonia were quite indifferent to their ethnic background until, with the emergence of the “Macedonian question,” they became the object of competing territorial claims and of ethnographic classifications from Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece.²⁸ At the time only a hint of a future Slavic-Macedonian national identity could be discerned.

However, for the moment, it was common in Macedonia—as in many culturally heterogeneous border regions like Vojvodina or Istria—for individuals to be opportunistic in stating their identity. In Skopska Crna Gora, peasants once admitted that sometimes they were Serbs, sometimes Bulgarians, depending how the question was worded.²⁹ This led the Swedish professor Rudolf Kjellén to view the population like a type of “flour from which you can bake any cake that you want, once the nationality has finally been decided.”³⁰

As was true all over Europe, “imagining the nation” was essentially staged by intellectuals, scientists, politicians, and church authorities. On the microlevel, it just seemed to be some abstract entity. The coexistence with people of other faiths was a daily, socially structured, and usually conflict-free experience for many. Everyone always knew who belonged to which group, because this was communicated outwardly in names, clothing, religious practices, and social barriers such as the marriage ban between Christians and Muslims.

Likewise, mutual respect and good neighborly relations were part of village life. Birth, marriage, death, as well as house building and harvesting provided occasions for public ritual and festivities through which people underscored their communality and mutual dependence. People supported each other beyond regional borders through neighborly help in harvesting and building (*moba* and *pozajmica*) and gathered in the evening to socialize and work, an activity known as *sijelo*.

As in many rural regions in Europe, traditional popular piety dominated over canonical stipulations in the population at large. This also offered many opportunities for the faiths to mingle. Although people observed the official holidays of their respective faith, often these were merely the Christian or Muslim adaptations of original customs. In Serbia, the clergy had learned to accept that people went to church more to meet each other than to attend the religious service. Priests tolerated the “freer interaction” that believers had with God and Church, including cults worshipping ancestors and house saints.³¹ As late as the 1930s, a study on the Belgrade suburb of Rakovica found that not one household there possessed a Bible or a New Testament, although everyone

believed in God: “We could not find these books anywhere or even a single person who would have known something about them. . . . All that everyone knows is that there are church books from which the Pope reads prayers.”³²

Folk traditions built many bridges between the religious communities. A person seeking spiritual guidance or praying for a rapid recovery of health might visit the priest in the morning and, just to be on the safe side, the Islamic instructor (*hodža*) in the afternoon. Even today, August 2 is the day on which the Orthodox Christians celebrate Saint Elias, the *Ilindan*, and the Muslims the *Alidun*, a fact that has found its way into the expression “*Do podne Ilija, od podne Alija*” (mornings Elias, afternoons Ali).³³

Around 1900, the nation-building process was fully underway throughout the entire region, with a bit of time lag in certain places. However, the proto-national communities (later the Serbs, Croats, Muslims, etc.) had not yet fully constituted themselves as modern nations. Originally, this was not a specifically South Slavic phenomenon. In France, Germany, and Italy, simple peasants also had to be transformed first into members of a nation.³⁴ However, unlike these parts of Europe, centuries of foreign rule in the Balkans had enabled room for ambivalence to emerge, in which avenues for identification through language, religion, and political history overlapped. Among other factors, there was no clear understanding of what constituted a nation, be it a common language and culture (as in Germany and Italy) or the tradition of statehood (as in France). On the one hand, the idea of a *Kulturnation*—as it was posited by Johann Gottfried Herder and conveyed in the region—might have pointed to the integration of South Slavs into one single nation. On the other hand, the heritage left by the Ottoman era included the phenomenon of the *Konfessionsnation*, the confessional nation, which used religious affiliation as the basis for differentiating among populations who shared a common language. Serbs, Croats, and Muslims spoke (and still speak) similar dialects, but they increasingly saw themselves as belonging to different peoples because of their faith. As important as the common cultural roots, shared language, and regional cohabitation were, the disparate historical-political traditions, especially those rooted in the different religious worldviews, created fissures too deep to allow the idea of a general Yugoslav identity to gain any ground without having to resort to instrumentalization “from above.” Not until the creation in 1918 of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes did a strong agency for socialization develop that actively advanced Yugoslav nation building.

Demographic Development and Family Structures

In the final thirty years of the nineteenth century, all South Slavic countries experienced far-reaching social and economic change. Population growth, agrarian and industrial development, and the transition to a monetary and market-based economy shook up the traditional social order of village life. The

economic dynamic that developed in the center and west of the European continent was no small contributing factor, one that appeared in the Balkans in the form of imperialism. Industrial goods needed new markets and accumulated capital needed new opportunities for investment. Railway construction, transregional markets, and the advancement of the monetary economy changed earlier forms of economic and communal life, which in turn brought new experiences, mentalities, and types of awareness. Unlike western Europe, the outlines of a modern industrial society, however, were only vaguely recognizable.

New dynamics were also developing from within society. Between 1880 and 1910 the population grew rapidly as the mortality rate sank. The highest demographic growth took place in Serbia (71.3 percent) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (63.9 percent), followed by Croatia and Slovenia (38.6 percent), Dalmatia (35.7 percent), and Vojvodina (33.6 percent). The slowest population to grow was that of Slovenia (9.4 percent).³⁵ Not until the period between the two world wars did the demographic discrepancy among the regions diminish. Along with Russia and Hungary, southeastern Europe experienced the highest birthrate in Europe.³⁶ One of the reasons for the great demographic growth lay in the extended rural family, the *zadruga* (household commune). The extended family constituted—except in Slovenia—the core of traditional social order in the countryside of Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Albania.³⁷ Sons and grandsons remained in their parental homes, while daughters married into other *zadrugas*. Unlike in western Europe, where it was necessary first to own land or have a craft before setting up a household, which meant that many people married late or not at all, the socioeconomic net of the enlarged South Slavic family could always easily integrate additional family members. People married young and had many children. In eastern and southeastern Europe, the social order lacked an effective regulatory mechanism like that which safeguarded western Europe from extreme population growth.

Also unlike western Europe, it was not until this period that the traditional union of productive and reproductive functions within the family, of home and workplace, began to break apart. The *zadruga* represented a community of property, life, work and authority. Private property did not exist, not even money. The head of the household was the father, who derived his role as master from his natural authority. He represented the family in public, managed family and economic business, and had the last word in all important matters. Women held a subordinate place within the family and had practically no rights. In this patriarchal society, strict rules of conduct dictated daily life and limited every individual's personal freedom. In places where the state had never gained a foothold, like Montenegro and Kosovo, a strong archaic code of honor prevailed, one that included blood feuds.

Yet even in the regions of its historical origin, the *zadruga* began to fall away in a staggered fashion and at different rates of speed. Factors like the

growing size of the family, the gradual expansion of the market economy, new types of employment in industry and trade, and the dissipation of the patriarchal order played a role. More and more households were splitting, usually when they reached a critical point of twenty to forty members.³⁸ This occurred earlier and faster in the east and the south. However, around 1890, about a fifth of the population in Croatia and Serbia still lived in an extended family.

Social and Economic Change

Around the turn of the century, about 85 percent of the population in Croatia-Slavonia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina worked in agriculture, and only about 10 percent earned their living in industry, handcraft, and trade; the rest worked in independent professions. Only Slovenia differed in this respect. Here about two-thirds of the population still worked in the agrarian sector, while 11 percent were employed in mining and industry.³⁹

The South Slavic region was divided into a number of distinct systems of agricultural law. The manorial system had been ended in 1848/1849 in Austria-Hungary, so that peasants were the owners of the land they farmed. This led to a differentiated structure of ownership and social life with several large modern agricultural enterprises, a wealthy farming middle class, but also increasing rural poverty. This lay the foundation for an—albeit modest—industrial development. The feudal system in Serbia was also abolished after the uprisings that occurred from 1815 to 1833. The principle prevailed here, too, that those who worked the land should own it. In the remaining regions, various forms of feudal dependency still existed. In Istria and Dalmatia the systems of colonate (*težaština*) and socage (*kmetije*) survived, which obliged farmers to turn over a portion of their harvest, anywhere from one-fifth to a half. These systems existed in many different variations. It is estimated that in 1925 as many as 100,000 peasant families were still working as coloni on land they didn't own.⁴⁰ Feudal relations in agriculture also remained intact in Bosnia-Herzegovina with the *čiftlik* system. More than half of the families, the majority being Orthodox and Catholic socagers, the *kmets*, were personally unfree, although they did have the right to buy their freedom. They were heavily burdened with the obligation to turn over a portion (usually a third) of their harvest. In early 1914, a total of 93,336 *kmet* families were still working a third of all arable soil.⁴¹ Similar primeval dependencies also prevailed in Macedonia and Kosovo.

Where agrarian reforms were undertaken, the efforts were half-hearted and contradictory. Legislators in Croatia-Slavonia, Serbia, and Montenegro tried to prevent the impoverishment of the peasants by upholding the principle of indivisible collective property and lifelong family solidarity. In Serbia, *zadrugas* were only permitted to be divided in exceptional cases, and by 1889 in Croatia this was only permitted if the resulting amount of property

allotted each party did not fall short of a legally stipulated minimum. Efforts to protect the homesteads (*okućje*) followed similar ideas. In order to protect peasants against excessive indebtedness and forced liquidation, a minimum of 8.5 acres including dwellings, draft animals, and inventory were required to be mortgage-free and exempt from liquidation. These protective measures hindered the mobilization of land and labor, the spread of market-based economic relations, and thus the segmentation of property and societal structures in rural areas.⁴²

For these reasons, the potential surplus population in agriculture seriously encumbered society throughout the entire Balkan region at the turn of the century. As the large families split up, landholdings became more and more fragmented. Land was divided up into small, unproductive parcels; herds of livestock and machinery were torn apart; all too often an entire house was dismantled, beam for beam. At least a third of the peasants in the Yugoslav region worked less than five acres of land, another third only up to twelve acres. Landholdings of any considerable size were only found in central Croatia and in Vojvodina; they were practically nonexistent in Serbia, Dalmatia, and Carinthia.⁴³

The result was indebtedness and poverty. Anyone with less than twelve acres to farm could just barely survive; those who owned less than five acres were in dire straits. In the period between 1910 and 1912, two-thirds of the farmers in Serbia could not earn the existential minimum. More than half of them did not own a yoke of oxen; a third had neither a plow nor even a bed.⁴⁴ Poverty was also indescribable in Croatia-Slavonia, Dalmatia, Istria, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was the similarity of these circumstances in which they lived and of the crises they had experienced that would later contribute considerably to the political merger of the South Slavic peoples.

Agrarian productivity was low, and many households persevered on subsistence farming. Still, step by step, the market economy was making inroads into rural regions, first in southern Hungary, Syrmia, and Slavonia, later in Serbia, and finally in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro. However, this left farming households at the mercy of cyclical fluctuations in the economy. The majority of them lacked the capital and the knowledge to intensify their agricultural production. Land use and cultivation techniques remained primitive with little diversification of produce; artificial fertilizers and modern farm machinery were unknown, as were root crops and industrial crops, and little changed in this regard until the interwar period.

The increase in agrarian productivity continued to lag far behind the dynamic growth in population. Instead of intensifying yields, peasants tended to increase arable farmland. They turned woods and meadows into grain fields, reduced livestock farming in favor of crop farming, and shifted their own eating habits from a meat-based diet to a vegetarian one. Despite these

efforts, food provision remained precarious. In 28 percent of the Serb farming households, the food shortages appeared each year by the end of October; in another 46 percent, the deficit appeared in January and February, all of which had serious consequences for the nutrition and state of health of the rural population.⁴⁵ About a hundred years after much of Europe had been cursed with rural overpopulation, the South Slavic countries first found themselves smitten with it, at a point when the curse had long been broken elsewhere.

As in many European societies, people sought a way out of their predicament by migrating in search of work. In doing so, they perpetuated traditional forms of periodic migratory labor known as *pečalba*. On the eve of the First World War, nearly 150,000 men from Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Macedonia made their way each year into the neighboring regions to hire themselves out as migratory artisans, wage laborers, or small businessmen. Istria and Dalmatia were also classic emigration regions.

Later than everywhere else in Europe, transcontinental labor migration did not take place to a significant degree until the 1880s. Then, between 1899 and 1913, more than a half million South Slavs left for the New World, four-fifths of whom were from the Habsburg monarchy.⁴⁶ Due to cyclical economic fluctuations, countries overseas limited immigration starting at the turn of the century, which meant that emigration provided far less relief to the taxed job market than had been the case in earlier decades in places like Germany or Scandinavia. The majority of the structurally underemployed jobseekers remained in their own country.

The low level of agricultural productivity also hampered development in trade and industry. Agricultural exports did not generate profits that could have been invested in industry, nor did a greater domestic demand for finished goods emerge in rural areas. People were simply too poor to be able to afford things that they did not produce themselves. Therefore, industrialization in the South Slavic countries began later, progressed slower, and developed in other branches than it did in the rest of Europe. Whereas the latecomers, Sweden and Denmark, did manage to initiate viable industrialization in the nineteenth century, and Italy, Hungary, and Russia created at least regional industrial centers, the Balkan countries—as well as Spain and Portugal—did not experience any substantial industrial growth.⁴⁷ Nor would there be any major impetus in industrialization until the 1930s; in fact, the rapid switch to advanced industrialization did not occur until 1945.

This was caused by a bundle of factors: the backward transportation infrastructure that hampered the development of transregional markets, the chronic lack of capital, the low level of education and training, and—last but not least—the powerful competition from developed regions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Starting at the turn of the century, the number of factories

and employed workers increased and levels of production grew annually by more than 10 percent, albeit from a very low starting point. Unfortunately, at the same time, the discrepancy to the rest of Europe also grew.⁴⁸ In Croatia-Slavonia, the number of industrial workers rose from 9,832 to 23,604 in the years between 1890 and 1910. In Serbia, this number had only risen to 16,095 by 1910, despite the efforts made by the government in its industrial policy. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, more than 65,000 industrial workers were employed in 1912/1913 as a result of the Austro-Hungarian development policy.⁴⁹

Since proto-industries had been weak in southeastern Europe during the early modern period, industry developed out of artisan crafts more than out of manufacturing. It was not textile manufacturing (as in England) or the coal, iron, and steel industry (as in Germany) that stood at the forefront in the beginning, but agriculture (mills and breweries) and forestry (timber and wood processing). In 1910, food production generated 55 percent of the revenue of all factory production in Serbia, while the textile industry only generated 8 percent. In Croatia, the leading branch of industry was timber, and industry would not start to diversify significantly until 1910.⁵⁰ Due to the lower level of technological requirements in this sector, the demand for machinery did not intensify as a spin-off effect. At first, heavy industry only played a subordinate role, except in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the Austro-Hungarian colonial regime had ignited a major thrust in industrialization.⁵¹

Life in the City

Until the interwar period, urbanization developed moderately and was greatly influenced by agriculture. Railroad construction, mining, and factories drew people from the countryside, and cities grew and changed the way they looked. However, some qualification is necessary here with regard to the use of the term “city.” On average, a city only had a few thousand inhabitants. In the thirty years prior to the First World War, the urban population increased threefold. Still, Belgrade only had 68,481 inhabitants in 1900; Zagreb 57,690; Sarajevo 38,035 (1895); and Ljubljana 46,000 (1910). The number of migrants to the cities was enormous, and yet in 1910 only 13.2 percent of the Serb population lived in cities. In Croatia the figure was just 8.5 percent. Only Russia and Finland had lower figures.⁵²

The migration from the countryside also changed the look and structure of the (sub)urban areas. The more newcomers arrived, the greater the village way of life infiltrated daily city life. The mass of urbanites lived under appalling conditions in small, ground-level farm buildings, not in tenement blocks and rear buildings as in western Europe. Living space was excessively expensive, overcrowded, poorly ventilated, squalid, and without any sanitary facilities. In 1906, an inquiry survey reported among other things “that a close causal

connection existed between life in such dwellings and the three greatest enemies of public health—tuberculosis, alcoholism, and venereal disease.⁵³ Only a small, wealthy elite could afford to live in comfortable townhouses.

The cityscape was not dominated by fuming smokestacks and proletarian hardship, but by the shabby dwellings of former rural inhabitants and small business dealers as well as the growing army of job-seeking day laborers.⁵⁴ Every other city dweller in Zagreb, Sarajevo, and Belgrade still worked in agriculture. In the suburbs, many farmed plots of land and kept poultry, pigs, or a cow. Perhaps the most prominent characteristic of southeastern European urbanization before the Second World War is that many cities were actually nothing more than gigantic villages. The only places that underwent a “European” urban metamorphosis were Ljubljana, Zagreb, Belgrade, and a few mid-sized cities.

In Serbia a great effort was made starting in the 1870s to remove all traces of the Ottoman past so that, as the city planner Emilijan Josimović expressed it, the “capital does not retain the form that barbarism gave it.”⁵⁵ Belgrade’s reconstruction was modeled on Vienna and its grand circular boulevard, the *Ringstrasse*. The only structures that were left as reminders of the 350 years of Turkish rule were the citadel, two mosques, and a fountain with Arabic inscriptions.⁵⁶ Almost simultaneously with western European metropolises, Belgrade was outfitted in the 1890s with electrical lighting and streetcars, and after 1900 with canalization and a water supply system.⁵⁷ Irrespective of the modest conditions from which the reconstruction was starting, the city planners were driven by the desire to simply skip over the laborious catch-up process and to hitch up an “airplane motor to the oxen cart,” as an observer put it.⁵⁸ Belgrade became a paradigm of modernity, a shop window displaying a culture that was more or less imitating the West.

About 1900, daily life and habits in the cities changed at a breathtaking pace, evident first in the spread of traditional costumes (*građanski kostim*). In Belgrade, hats and felt caps replaced the traditional fez. Instead of gathering together in the evening, as was widely done in the villages, the elegant reception day *žur* (*jour de réception*) became fashionable among the Belgrade upper class.⁵⁹ Also in other cities of the South Slavic region, the upper echelons of society began to adopt European forms of socializing and lifestyles, such as salons, leisure activity, and interior design.⁶⁰ Bourgeois attitudes toward romantic love and marriage ideals also began to take hold.

However, there were also interactions between the distant worlds of the townhouse and the farmhouse. Lifestyle, fashion, and etiquette gradually made inroads into everyday peasant life. “Where a wooden cup had once been enough, one now finds a glass; the petroleum lamp replaces kindling wood,” a foreign traveler observed in 1897. “European farm wagons with iron

fittings are replacing the old prehistorical vehicle with the creaking wooden wheels.”⁶¹ Whereas the respective local folk costumes were still being worn in the countryside up to the end of the nineteenth century, the men and women in the cities were already wearing West European clothing. Changes in customs spread from the cities outward. People began to address each other with the formal form of “you” instead of the more commonly used familiar form and to greet each other with the words “*dobar dan*” (good day)—known as the “German form” of greeting.⁶²

Progress and Uncertainty

The desire for national emancipation was generated not least by the awareness of how backward things were. Members of the elite considered liberation from foreign rule to be the prerequisite for a better future and an emancipatory strategy to further development that would finally enable the people of the region to participate in European civilization as members of equal standing. Yet the harbingers of the new European era, like technical progress, bourgeois culture, and liberal social morality, descended upon agrarian society in south-eastern Europe so suddenly that the changes severely shook the long-standing mainstays of identity and uprooted traditional values and societal relations. In particular, the countries formerly under Ottoman rule experienced a profound break with the traditions of their Muslim heritage, which had shaped daily life and society for four hundred years. Radical societal change subdued people’s optimism about progress and caused anxious uncertainty about the future. The key question was how their own social-cultural identity was to be reconciled with the new challenges facing them.

Since the Enlightenment, the intellectual elite of southeastern Europe had cultivated the idea of societal progress, which they associated with words like “reason” and “science” and equated with “Europeanization.”⁶³ During the nineteenth century, the enthusiasts of this intellectual interaction with Europe were young students attending higher schools of learning and universities in Russia, Germany, France, Italy, Hungary, and Austria. Over the course of the next few decades, a Europe-oriented intelligentsia emerged from their ranks, comprised of people familiar with the ideas of liberalism, socialism, and Russian populism.⁶⁴ At the same time, Muslim educated classes were adopting Islamic ideologies and movements from the Arab world, Asia, and Russia.⁶⁵ Islamic scholars also studied European philosophy intensely, especially rationalism. In view of the decline of the once powerful Ottoman Empire, they asked, how were the administrative, economic, military, and judiciary achievements of the West to be explained?⁶⁶

The younger generations thirsted after answers to the big questions of this new era. How could the curse of backwardness be overcome and the

intellectual and technical level of “Europe” achieved? Which means were best to fight the prevailing patriarchal mentality and to create a sense of national identity among the rural population? How could the interests of the great powers be confronted and a body politic organized?

The educated classes of southeastern Europe took all the major intellectual and political movements of Europe (or of the Islamic world) with a grain of salt. However, this does not corroborate a popular stereotypical assumption that the absence of the Reformation and the Enlightenment caused the Balkans to harbor long-standing, specifically anti-Western attitudes hostile to modernization.⁶⁷ The decisive factor was not the fundamental differences between the civilizations of the Latin West and the Orthodox or Islamic East, but the fact that the reception of major ideas took place under thoroughly different societal circumstances. At the turn of the century, more than four-fifths of the population made their living from agriculture. Anyone seeking to gain widespread resonance for their ideas at a time when developments were only beginning to politicize the mass public still had to take into consideration the attitudes, values, and interests of the peasantry.

Up to that point, it had not been possible to develop an industrial society modeled on the West, even though there were clear indications that the political system, public life, national cultures, lifestyles, and value orientations in the cities were undergoing a gradual process of *embourgeoisement*.⁶⁸ Conditions for this had been particularly favorable in Slovenia, Croatia, and Slavonia. In the nineteenth century, a small bourgeoisie had developed from the ranks of the traditional urban classes, wealthy farmers, the nobility, artisans, merchants, government bureaucrats, and military officers. What the newly emerging business circles increasingly yearned to see was the industrial production associated with smoke billowing from ever more factory chimneys. Their vocabulary was augmented by new words like “producers,” “competition,” “business cycles,” “capitalism,” and “working class.”⁶⁹ The situation was quite different in the peasant societies formerly under Ottoman rule, because the majority of the urban Muslims had emigrated at the time when the Ottoman influence was being eradicated in these regions. The creation of a bourgeoisie here, as in Serbia, had to start literally from scratch. However, in less than three generations, a new social elite had developed that consisted of people from poor rural circumstances who had risen to higher posts in government service or established themselves in independent professions.

In all of the South Slavic countries, improved educational opportunities in rural communities and greater regional mobility among the well-schooled and university-educated youth proved to be a powerful motor for an intellectual and national awakening. Back in the 1860s and 1870s, the first generation educated abroad had brought the ideas of liberalism to Serbia, which was also

reflected in the political system established in 1881. Both the ruling Progress Party and the Liberals favored the idea of imitating the Western path to development as quickly as possible, in order to abolish the “limitations of outdated patriarchal Serbia.”⁷⁰ But only a small elite were convinced of the feasibility to simply impose the European model of progress on their own country through a type of “revolution from above.” Serbia lacked the underlying support of the bourgeois classes, who could have anchored the Western type of modernization more firmly into local society. Besides the royal family, a total of six millionaires lived in Belgrade in 1900; in Zurich alone there were 500.⁷¹

It was not the economic sphere but the political one that provided the realm in which to develop all things new. Every party in Serbia took up the cause of political freedom, yet no party had worked out a clear economic reform program. This demonstrates a nearly unbridgeable gulf between political modernity and economic backwardness. The Serb newspaper *Dnevni List* (Daily Newspaper) illustrated it in the following way: “Nowhere else in the world can one see the miraculous and absurd situation that modern ideas of political and social progress are advocated in the parliament by village cash-loan givers, former municipal cops, and illiterate bench-sitters and chicken sellers.”⁷²

This entire debate over catch-up development and Europeanization occurred against the backdrop of an intensifying competition between the major powers in the era of imperialism. Granted, the Balkans had been the object of hegemonic power projection for centuries.

However, advanced industrialization and economic global expansion created hegemony of a new sort at the end of the nineteenth century. Increasingly the aim was to secure new markets and capital-intensive investments. Trade policy, lending policy, and railway construction created new economic dependencies that the new Balkan states found hard if not impossible to avoid at first. After the Congress of Berlin, Serbia had been forced to sign disadvantageous trade contracts with Austria-Hungary and soon fell deeply into debt. Between 1880 and 1914, its liabilities grew from 16.5 million to 903.8 million French francs.⁷³ For this reason, the debate on Europeanization was always accompanied by a fear of foreign dependence, as is illustrated in the controversy of railroad construction.

At the beginning of the 1880s, Serbia and Montenegro were the only countries in Europe without a railway system. In parliament there was stiff resistance to the railroad construction stipulated by the Congress of Berlin. Was Serbian society even ready for the technological revolution, asked the members of parliament? Didn't the imposed modernization intently create new dependencies on foreign lenders? Serbia would “suffer the same fate as the Indians following the discovery of America,” it was said. Think of

Columbus, who “brought European culture to America, but with it also the chains of slavery.”⁷⁴

Broadly speaking, the elites in Serbia and Montenegro split into two main groups that roughly equated the distinction between “Liberals” and “Conservatives” in Europe or between “Westerners” and “Slavophiles” in Russia: namely, a European-modern and a Slavic-traditional group.⁷⁵ While the liberal, state-oriented “Westerners” pushed for the separation of church and state and for institutional, legal, and constitutional reform, the conservative, community-oriented “traditionalists” tended to cultivate the autochthon roots of a meta-historical, natural, and organically perceived national identity. Although both movements envisioned a better future, the former greatly emphasized institutional change, while the latter stressed a distinct *élan vital* of the Slavs.⁷⁶

Parallel to this and in a process observable throughout the entire Islamic world, the Muslim intelligentsia also developed two wings, a European-laicist and an Islamic-religious one.⁷⁷ Members of the former group had been educated in secular schools and at European universities, opposed traditional, religious erudition, and favored a secular, politically determined concept of nation. However, the majority of the intelligentsia still adhered to the Islamic type of Bosnian Muslim collective identity. Muslims had been catapulted into a new world by the Austro-Hungarian project to impose European civilization. The former political legitimacy of Islam, as it had been universally understood, had been forced to give way to a heteronomous and secular state legitimacy imported from the West, one that fundamentally rocked its social and cultural core. The challenge before them was to harmonize all that was new with that which was tried and tested, to conjoin the universal aim of modernization with the preservation of cultural-religious identity. But how?

During these years, the popularity of the reformist movement of Salafism, which reinterpreted ancient writings in pursuit of what the reformers considered true Islam, helped introduce two different strategies of adaptation. One strategy postulated the compatibility of Islam with Western rationalism and recommended the “modernization of Islam.” It was argued that faith and science had not been contradictory even in earlier eras. In his work *Islam and Culture*, published in 1894, Osman Nuri Hadžić, for example, proposed a rational-enlightened model for the future.⁷⁸ The other, at first less popular strategy emphasized the universality and values of the religion and pushed for an “Islamization of modernity.” Pan-Islamism was also part of this tradition of thought, an idea that found a voice in the magazine *Behar* (Blossom) starting early in the twentieth century.⁷⁹

All this discourse on modernity, progress, and the future appears closely connected to that on cultural identity, collective values, and national assertion

and dignity. As was the case throughout Europe, the new challenges prompted strong counterreactions. Anxiety about the future and antimodern reflexes were cloaked in egalitarian debate; rural traditions, local self-administration, and the extended family were adjured, in order to fight off the subversive trend of the new era. Wasn't the contrived finery of the capital, Belgrade, which so flagrantly contradicted the poverty-ridden world of the masses, no more than a subversive attack against Serbia's socially just, agrarian society? Why should the capital city lead the outside world to believe in its progress and high culture when in reality the countryside was plagued with poverty?⁸⁰

It was against this backdrop around the turn of the century that the fundamental dichotomy between urban and rural emerged, a dichotomy between modern, Western-influenced urbanity, on the one hand, and village life with its traditional social culture, on the other. The city represented the condensation of all hopes and fears with regard to modernity; it was the metaphor both for progress and decline, the promise for a better future and the signal to return to the old social and moral order. What is more, the urban-rural dichotomy also symbolized the social dividing line between "rulers" and "people," between the "city-coat wearers" (*kaputaši*) and those wearing peasant costume.

As was typical for all of Europe, this confrontation between the familiar and the foreign, between the supposed security provided by patriarchal values and the attractions and adventures of urban progressivity served as a blueprint for numerous literary works.⁸¹ "Progress" was often perceived as culturally foreign and thus radicalized fears of a loss of identity and a decline of morals—fears articulated in Serbian literature by Laza Kostić, Đura Jakšić, or Stevan Sremac and in Bosnian literature by Safet Beg Bašagić and Edhem Mulabdić.⁸² Urban and rural became symbolic representations for the contrary forces of change and persistence and for the contradictory fears of a return to atavism and barbarism, for some people, and of the irretrievable loss of the tried and true, for others. An entire legion of ethnographers, village researchers, and historians set out to trace the true roots of Serbian, Croatian, and Slovenian culture and to reconstruct the pastoral world of peasantry as a counterweight to the raw industrial present. Often modernity meant foreignness, even alienation, "something that should be eliminated," as a member of the Serbian parliament expressed it.⁸³

Both the Liberals and the Radicals in Serbia tried to dissipate the tensions between traditional social structures and patriarchal values, on the one side, and the needs of modern constitutionality, economic management, and governance, on the other. As legislators, they thus repeatedly relied on established common law when reforming agrarian, family, and trade and commercial law in order to retain tested and trusted social institutions of village life and thus avoid the upheaval of capitalism.⁸⁴ This was consistent with the thinking of

the socialist Svetozar Marković, one of Serbia's most important intellectuals in the nineteenth century. Influenced by Russian revolutionaries, he advocated an agrarian socialism that was based on the societal order of the village and emphasized the self-administration (*samouprava*) of the traditional extended family (*zadruga*) and the community (*opština*). He considered collective ownership and collective production to be the more humane alternative to the exploitative capitalistic state.⁸⁵ The following generation of politicians also thought technology and science should be advanced, but—according to Nikola Pašić, the leader of the Radical Party—they both were to be used in the “Slavic-Serbian spirit.”⁸⁶ This was also very similar to the position of the founders of the Croatian Peoples' Peasant Party.

The majority of Muslim intellectuals decided to favor a pragmatic strategy that adopted a select number of European standards, just as Turkish and Egyptian authors had. Bosnian spiritual leaders found citations in classic writings to justify to their fellow countrymen why they should enter military service in the hated Christian army. Compromise was recommended in other questions as well, such as in the matter of integrating the sharia into the Habsburg legal and justice system.⁸⁷ The predominant paradigm was therefore not to fetishize the past or the religion, let alone some nebulous anti-Westernism, but to attempt to reconcile the imported ideas, values, and structures with the dominant societal conditions.

By the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, the glorified view of the Balkans as an exotic and romantic region was no longer able to bear up against societal realities. Just as everywhere else in Europe, the emerging industrialization, urbanization, social mobilization, and other fundamental processes of modernity had already shaken traditional agrarian society to the core, even though industrialized, urbanized society with its characteristic ways of life, aesthetics, and scientific-technological momentum would not fully develop until decades later. The socioeconomic upheavals in Europe's southeast region became noticeable later than in western Europe and occurred slower, less dynamically, and in other directions. Compared with England, France, and Germany they appeared modest; even Russia and Italy were far more advanced. Still, measured against what had existed before, the change was indeed spectacular not only because it created younger, mobile, and educated generations who carried forth the spirit of change, but also because it intensified tensions between social experiences and political realities and thus brought about nationalism. In this sense, an irreversible transformation process was forging ahead that not only thoroughly changed socioeconomic realities but also pushed the national question high up on the political agenda.