

graphic and climatic features and historical phenomena that have – in the author's view – decisively influenced the shaping and courses of the history of the Balkan nations from the fall of Constantinople in 1453 until the wars of Yugoslav succession in 1991–99. The reader gets the impression that this is a kind of a guide to a *Wild Europe*, and its main goal is to provide an introduction to the history of Southeastern Europe in the easiest way. At the same time, the book obviously seeks to offer a satisfactory answer to the question as to why this part of Europe remains, even in modern times, politically inferior to the West. The writer shows commendable objectivity, convincing argumentation and skillfully drawn parallels between similar phenomena from different epochs, an approach which may be very risky in modern historiography. Relying on the extensive and relevant literature from the field of Balkan studies, the author depicts the most important historical processes in the Balkans in the form of an easy-to-read novel whose parts are harmoniously put together to form a whole. Mazower first precisely defines the geo-political area of the Balkans. There follows an overview of its geographic and climatic features, of its multicultural structure and the distinct life style of Balkan nations, especially under Ottoman rule. In accordance with

these historical facts, the writer outlines the process of national awakening of the Balkan peoples, the establishment of their cultural institutions and progressive accumulation of state-building energies in the context of a slow but steady decline of the Ottoman Empire in Europe, i.e. opening of the so-called "Eastern Question", time and again decided by the Great Powers in accordance with their particular political interests. In the end, the writer attempts to explain the outbreak of hostilities in former Yugoslavia after the fall of communism, without resorting to prejudices about the Balkans and their nations widespread in Western scholarship and journalism. As a matter of fact, the writer suggests that the bloody wars in former Yugoslavia – accompanied by barbarism, ethnic cleansing and terrible retributions – were not an expression of the primitive mentality of so-called *Balkan man*, disposed to violence and atrocity, but an embodiment of new technological warfare of the modern era. Accordingly, Mazower, much like Maria Todorova, convincingly questions all derogatory labels and ideological stereotypes that have been attached to this European region ever since the Carnegie Endowment for Peace published a report on the Balkan Wars in 1914. The author of this review strongly recommends this book to readers.

BRANIMIR ANZULOVIC, *HEAVENLY SERBIA: FROM MYTH TO GENOCIDE*.
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Reviewed by Miroslav Svirčević

During the latest Balkan crisis and wars of Yugoslav succession (1991–99) scores of books produced by Western scholars and publicists shared a common goal: to recognize and explain the reasons for the gory disintegration of Tito's Yugoslavia, a country once seen as the "most liberal" in the former Communist bloc. The basic

question Western observers addressed was what had caused the closely related Yugoslav peoples to break up amidst such hatred, destruction, mass atrocities and ethnic cleansing, accusations against which none of the warring parties can possibly defend itself. *Heavenly Serbia* by Branimir Anzulovic, an American of Croatian de-

scent, is one of such books, and it offers its own, and very biased, view of the causes leading to the latest Balkan tragedy.

The author struggles to create an impression of Serbs as the only and eternal culprits for all Balkan conflicts ever since Serbia achieved international recognition at the Congress of Berlin in 1878. In his view, all that the Serbs have ever wanted in their modern history is to take control of their neighbours in order to carry out their megalomaniacal and genocidal dream of re-establishing a Serbian empire. In the process, Anzulovic stresses, their political aggression has constantly and obsessively been aimed against Croats, at all times on a higher level of cultural development than Serbs. Seeking to substantiate this unfounded, malevolent and, in the last analysis, unhistorical thesis, Anzulovic offers some "well-proven evidence", which often lead him to absurd, indeed, quite dangerous conclusions. Once arranged in a system, they take on the aspect of a genuine racist theory such as that found in Hitler's *Mein Kampf* or in political projects such as the KKK. The underlying idea of this ideological pamphlet, which the book in fact is, is that the Serbs, ever since their first war of independence against Ottoman rule in 1804, have sought to create a Greater Serbia, nourished by the vindictive ideas of the Kosovo myth, by genocidal battle cries found in epic poetry (in particular in the *Mountain Wreath* by the Montenegrin prince-bishop Petar II Petrovic Njegoš), by their disposition towards violence resulting from a patriarchal social system under centuries-long Ottoman rule, by the totalitarian and very primitive culture of Orthodox Christianity incapable of producing a modern democratic culture because of its petrified caesaro-papism, and finally, owing to the understanding and ample support, especially during the Balkan Wars and the First World War, extended by the Great Powers, as ready as

ever to satisfy all Serbian political appetites. It seems obvious that what we have here is a "shovelled" pile of false information and distorted facts lacking support in historical evidence, or facts taken out of their historical context. They are not difficult to disprove by valid argumentation, which is to show that the book in fact is an incompetent and unscrupulous ideological defamation of a whole nation and its cultural achievement.

The author's first thesis is that the Kosovo myth is a call to avenge the Serbian defeat at the 1389 Battle of Kosovo, the eventual loss of independence and centuries-long enslavement under the multinational and religiously tolerant Ottoman Empire, with the view to attaining a "Heavenly Serbia". The first part of this thesis is ontological. This way of interpreting the so-called Kosovo myth is by no means a novelty, and can be found in some other ill-informed students of Balkan history, such as Ger Duizings, Michael Sells etc. The question that arises, however, is whether this interpretation is correct or superfluous. Careful examination of the historical facts that led to such a cultural phenomenon as the Kosovo oath (Kosovo covenant) shows that this is a superfluous, overtly biased and, consequently, incorrect interpretation of the message the phenomenon communicates. Firstly, rather than the Kosovo myth, it is the term Kosovo oath that does justice to the gist of the phenomenon. Secondly, the gist of the Kosovo oath, a variation of a biblical story, has never been a call for revenge or for the destruction of other peoples for the sake of an imaginary kingdom of God conceived centuries ago; rather, it has been an expression of core Christian values. The Kosovo oath assumed a mythic character in epic literature during the Ottoman occupation. By the beginning of the age of nationalism the Kosovo oath had been imprinted on the collective memory of the people as an ever-lasting

historical lesson and a source of political inspiration. Serbia's modern cultural pattern, built up between the First Insurrection (1804) and the First World War (1914), found creative inspiration in the Kosovo oath. In that sense, it has never been a destructive ideological principle; on the contrary, it has been a positive value inspiring the Serbs to work towards their political and cultural emancipation in keeping with European values and the European way of life. This is a fact which not even the way Milošević abused the Kosovo oath in his struggle for absolute power in Communist Yugoslavia – most readily observable in his 1989 speech delivered at the commemoration of the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, offered by Anzulovic as the ultimate proof of his thesis – can overturn. A rigid Communist hardliner, lacking any understanding of Christianity and its values, Milošević had never really understood the Kosovo oath or taken it into account. He was interested in it inasmuch as he could use it as an instrument in his struggle for unlimited, Bolshevik-type of power.

As for the second part of the thesis, that the Ottoman Empire was religiously tolerant, it is only partly true. The Ottoman Empire was based on the *millet* system, and the millet system in its turn was based on religious criteria with the Muslim *millet* as privileged. The Empire's attitude towards the Christian *millet* (which included all Orthodox Christians irrespective of their ethnic origin) and its religious needs varied with the political situation: at times more tolerant, at others less tolerant or even completely discriminatory. What is interesting, however, is the context in which Anzulovic places his reference to this "inbuilt" religious tolerance of the Ottoman Empire. Describing tolerance as a feature also characterizing the multinational Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, he argues that, by contrast, it could never be adopted in the Byzantine

world because its cultural pattern was essentially at odds with the very notion of religious tolerance. For that reason, he argues, Serbs did not find religious equality sufficient, but demanded a privileged status, which they obtained when the Patriarchate of Peć, i.e. the Serbian Orthodox Church, was restored in 1557! Indeed, this line of reasoning results in an overtly racist attitude towards a great world civilization, one whose contribution to the cultural and political history of humankind may well be described as immeasurable. To say that there can be no religious tolerance in Orthodox nations is as preposterous as it is untrue. The past is replete with examples to the contrary. As for Serbia, a system of religious tolerance, unique in fourteenth-century Europe, was legally introduced in the reign of emperor Dušan (1331–55). At a time Dušan's Code stipulated legal protection for all recognized Christian confessions (Orthodox and Roman Catholic), Europe had experienced several waves of religious wars and fanaticism. This example alone shows how incorrect and malevolent Anzulovic's first thesis is.

A second key thesis is that another cornerstone of the alleged Greater Serbian policy in the Balkans is to be found in the poetic messages contained in the *Mountain Wreath* (especially in those centred round an event known as the "massacre of Muslim converts"), an epic by the Montenegrin prince-bishop Petar II Petrović Njegoš. Purportedly, his account of hatred against the enemies of Christian Serbs encouraged aggressive and murderous action again and again. In Anzulovic's distorted view, the *Mountain Wreath* is the climax of belligerent epic poetry calling for vengeance and genocide (which, in his view, marks almost all folk poems from the Kosovo Cycle), because the enemy is demonized to the point that paves the way to its total destruction. This is yet another in the series of Anzulovic's outra-

geous fabrications. Indeed, it takes much intellectual courage to label as genocidal a beautiful epic poem replete with humane messages. Much as the *Mountain Wreath* is a product of its environment, and especially of its time (the age of Romanticism and national revolutions in all of Europe, the Balkans included), it is also an expression of man's universal striving for humanity, justice and freedom, universal struggle for a more decent human life. In that sense, the most famous Serb poem has since 1847 been considered a pearl of European literature as a whole by all Western scholars. Only a biased and ill-disposed observer can choose to appraise this work of poetry and philosophy in the way Anzulovic does. Moreover, in order to underscore the alleged difference between Serbs and Croats in terms of civilization – namely, the latter's embedment in Western culture in contrast to the former – Anzulovic describes Croatian folk epics as the complete opposite to destructive and genocidal Serbian. His examples are *Osman* by Ivan Gundulić and *Odiljenje sigetsko* by Pavao Ritter Vitezović, where the poets treat the enemy with due respect. This is a typical example of how a manipulative use of half-truths may mislead an uninformed reader. Firstly, Ivan Gundulić was not Croat, but a Roman Catholic Serb of Dubrovnik. Anzulovic resourcefully evades the subject of Gundulić's poem. It is a well-known fact that Gundulić glorified Serbia's Middle Ages ("the ancient house of the Nemanjić"). The whole Book 8 is dedicated to Serbs, whereas the word "Croat" barely occurs in the poem. Would a Croat poet in his most beautiful epic have sung about another people, while barely mentioning "his own"? Gundulić was posthumously assigned to the Croatian ethnic group. Secondly, in his time Pavao Ritter Vitezović was a great, if not the greatest, admirer of the Serbian language and culture. In his *Serbica Illustrata*, he marvels

at the beauty of the language and its literary potentials. Were Anzulovic right, Vitezović would have done nothing of the sort. Would anyone appreciate the language of savages and barbarians calling for revenge and genocide?

A third key thesis is that it is in the nature and mentality of the Serbs to use violence, as a result of their centuries-long life in a patriarchal social system under Ottoman rule. Pursuing his ideological claim about a firm, specifically Orthodox, state–church–nation association (obviously adopted from Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*), given an additional boost in the Dinaric highlands and its patriarchal social context, the author infers that this pattern of culture further inflamed Serb expansionism at the expense of their neighbours, in particular Croats, Bosnian Muslims and Albanians.

This line of reasoning suggests that Anzulovic is completely ignorant of not only Orthodoxy and the patriarchal culture of Dinaric Serbs – whose past was marked by their day-to-day struggle to survive in an inhospitable natural environment and under foreign rule – he is also ignorant about patriarchal culture as such. For him, it a priori is a primitive form of communal life and thus requires no further discussion. And the patriarchal system is an exceptionally complex, multilayered and rich culturological phenomenon which involves highly structured social relations, and is essentially democratic in nature. Of course, this form of civilization was characterized by a low technical/technological level, which, however, does not necessarily mean that it was utterly primitive and lacked any rules and regulations. On the contrary, patriarchal societies were based on a strong moral and religious code respectful of highest values: honour, honesty, hard work, commitment to freedom and independence, selflessness, condemnation of crime. The highlanders of Montenegro and Hercegovina sum it all up in

the phrase “honour and valour”. It is best seen from the norms of customary law regulating relations within extended families (*zadruga*) in the Balkans. A careful look at these norms shows that the central institutions of such communities (master of the house, mistress of the house, house council) functioned according to the principles of pre-state democracy, assuming responsibility for their members. In the absence of formal laws, these customs were transferred to the earliest domestic political institutions (tribal organization, village self-government). The Dinaric Serbs of Dalmatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Montenegro who resettled the deserted areas of Serbia (Šumadija) after Austro-Turkish wars in the 18th century, maintained their customs and adapted them to the new environment. This customary law was studied, and appraised with respect, by many scholars, including Valtazar Bogišić in the nineteenth century (*Collection of Current Customary Laws of South Slavs*, Zagreb: JAZU, 1867), and J. M. Halpern and B. Halpern (*A Serbian Village in Historical Perspective*, Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 1986) in the twentieth century. Had Anzulovic given it all a closer look, his conclusions, combined with a balanced scholarly approach, would likely have been different.

Finally, Anzulovic accuses all Western powers, notably Great Britain and France, of political irresponsibility in nourishing and supporting alleged Serb megalomaniacal political aspirations, which were accomplished with the creation in 1918 of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes – or, as he puts it – Greater Serbia, which, for the first time in history, put an end to Croatia’s statehood. This statement is yet another Anzulovic’s manipulation, and an easily disprovable one. It is obvious that not a single Western power would have permitted the creation of a Greater Serbia. As for Croatia’s statehood, it lost independence in 1102, in the

wake of the Battle of Gvozd. From 1102 to 1918, Croatia was under the Crown of St Istvan, a province of Hungary, though in various political and legal arrangements.

With other errors, shortcomings and absurd qualifications added to these main theses of Anzulovic’s book, a swarm of falsities and ideological labels, one gets a complete picture of the true worth of this book, ambitiously claiming to explain the causes of the tragedy the Balkans suffered in the last ten years of the twentieth century. So, for example, one can read that the date of the Battle of Rovine is 1394, whereas in fact it took place a year later, or that the leading figure of the Communist regime in the SFRY was Aleksandar Ranković, head of the secret police – which is used as another proof of Greater Serbian hegemonism in former Yugoslavia. Of course, leading figures of the Titoist regime, real policy- and decision-makers between the 1960s and 80s, such as Tito, Kardelj, Krajačić, Bakaric etc. are not so much as mentioned!

In making a long string of half-truths and outright falsities, and failing to mention a number of significant facts, Anzulovic simply continues a long-established anti-Serbian ideology observable in the political thinking of all those Croatian politicians and intellectuals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries whose programme is based on the implementation of the so-called Croatian state rights: Ante Starčević, Josip Frank, Eugen and Slavko Kvaternik, Ivan Andrović, Ante Pavelić, Franjo Tuđman. The objective of this political programme was the creation of an independent Croatian state the extent of which considerably exceeded the Croat-inhabited area and threatened Serbian existential interests. The programme involved physical and spiritual elimination of Serbs from the territories envisaged to become part of the independent Croatian state (mostly within the former

Austro-Hungarian Monarchy). A prerequisite for achieving that objective was to smear, indeed, to demonize the Serbs, offering “scientific” evidence for their forever being a people of barbarians and aggressors, incapable of civilized behaviour. With the building and spreading of such a stereotypical image the path is smoothed to political action, especially with Serbia in an unfavourable international position caused by the disastrous policies of Milošević’s regime. In that regard, Anzulovic is not much different from his preferred ideological models from the Croatian political past. Although wrapped up in a veil of “proven” scholarly theories, his discourse is contemptuous not only of the Serbs, their history and culture, but of the Orthodox Christian world as a whole. The only difference is the form he gives to his exposition of the Croatian state rights

programme, i.e. his rhetoric. One credit he must be admitted is for his wording, the method of exposition and the skill in manipulating facts. He expounds his views in a way that seems to work within the parameters of the modern world. Anzulovic seeks to present the underlying ideas of the retrograde 19th-century Croatian state rights programme as conforming to the rules set by the on-going processes of globalization and integration. Even so, his ideological argumentation is for the most part so stretched that his main conclusions become unconvincing and those subsidiary amusing. To put it briefly, Anzulovic’s book is of little scholarly value. It should be taken for what it is, an ideological pamphlet with clear political goals: to justify the process of creating an independent Croatian state and the related elimination of the Serbian people.