

## ON MODERNITY IN GENERAL AND ON THE MAIN OBSTACLES TO MODERNITY IN SERBIA IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY – AND AFTERWARDS

### O modernosti uopšte i o glavnim preprekama modernosti u Srbiji tokom XX stoleća – i kasnije

*APSTRAKT Ovaj rad nudi, najpre, jednu definiciju pojma modernost, zatim, rekonstrukciju istorijskog porekla modernosti kao širokog i dugotrajueg idejnog/duhovnoh i praktičnog projekta – te glavne teorijske vizije atributa i uslova njegove savremene egzistencije. Zatim se, na osnovu rezultata tih logičkih, teorijsko-metodoloških i istorijskih razmatranja, analizuje karakter glavnih društveno-istorijskih tokova u Srbiji tokom dvadesetog veka i, najzad, utvrđuju se razlozi zbog kojih projekat modernosti nikad nije postao osnova ili makar relevantan usmeravajući faktor ljudskog delanja/ponašanja u ovoj sredini.*

*KLJUČNE REČI modernost, visoka/kasna modernost, Srbija, sociocid*

*ABSTRACT This work offers, in the first place, a definition of the notion of modernity, then, a reconstruction of historical origins of that wide and longlasting ideal/spiritual and practical project, and the main theoretical views of the attributes and conditions of its contemporary existence. The analysis of the character of the main socio-historical currents in Serbia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century – based upon the above mentioned logical, theoretical, methodological and historical considerations – reveals the reasons why the project of modernity has never become a basis or, at least, a relevant orientational factor for human action/behaviour in the milieu.*

*KEY WORDS modernity, high/late modernity, Serbia, sociocide*

## Introductory note

In the opinion of some politicians and political analysts in Serbia, the assassination of Dr. Zoran Đinđić, the Prime Minister of Serbia (on 12 March 2003), was not only an act of terrorism, but also an essentially anti-modern act; an endeavour against the strategy of modernization of Serbia which, according to them, Zoran Đinđić had embodied. What did they mean by that? Well, many things. Yet, in spite of the differences in their views and analyses, it could be noticed that almost all of them had in mind the fact that modernizing projects in Serbia over the past, say, nearly two centuries (as a matter of fact, in the periods when the projects had existed at all), had always been obstructed, in many ways; including killing some of those prominent and influential individuals who intended – and tried – to carry them out.

The politicians and analysts (mentioned above) were right. For the history of Serbia, ever since it came into being as a more or less independent state/political entity in the 19th century, and throughout the period in which it has been incorporated into (the first, second and third) Yugoslavia (from 1918 to 2003), and finally now, when it exists as a part of the State Unity of Serbia and Montenegro might ultimately be seen as a history of decisive resistance to, and/or reckless denials of modernity.

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Let us see now, firstly, what modernity is – including the origins and historical genesis of modernity “as such”, and of its more specific contemporary varieties: *new, second, high, late, reflexive, third phase...*, as Ulrich Beck (e.g., in his *Risk Society*), Anthony Giddens (e.g., in: *Modernity and Self-Identity, The Consequences of Modernity...*), Stephen Toulmin (e.g., in *Cosmopolis – The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*) and many others use to call them in their works<sup>•</sup> – then, in short, what the main (particularly more recent) ways of theoretical/ideological and practical denying of modernity have been, and, finally, why modernity, namely, its

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<sup>•</sup> Dealing with *postmodernity*, as an undoubtedly legitimate comprehension/understanding of, and approach to the world we are facing and living in nowadays, would require an extra chapter. Some suspicions about validity of postmodern social thought, however, I already exposed – in: Karel Turza, “Šta je modernost i kako se ona najčešće dovodi u pitanje?” (“*What is modernity, and how is it mainly questioned?*”), Treći program Radio Beograda, No. 107, 108 (III, IV 1996), str. (pp.) 83-102 – so, postmodernity will be only slightly considered in this article.

main attributes/conditions have not been acceptable in Serbia (Yugoslavia) in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and afterwards.

### What is modernity?

Searching for a proper definition of modernity has always been a difficult task for at least two reasons: because modernity is, in many of its aspects, an inevitably unstable and everchanging phenomenon – as John Herman Randall put it many years ago<sup>1</sup> – and, on the other hand, due to the fact that various authors, living in various, sometimes very different socio-historical and cultural contexts usually reflect the issue of modernity (as well as almost all other issues/topics they are facing and are interested in) in various ways, mainly or entirely in accordance with the cultural values, and patterns that (as social facts) prevail in their milieus; about the latter, the most important heuristically fruitful theoretical and methodological ideas were developed in the works of Emile Durkheim and Heinrich Rickert<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> John Herman Randall, *The Making of the Modern Mind*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1976, p. 566.

<sup>2</sup> As is well known, according to Durkheim, *social facts (les faits sociale)* exercise coercive power over individuals and, what is more important, the constraining nature of *social facts* is often not recognized by people, so they usually comply (with them) convinced that they follow *their own choices and interests*. Social scientists (and sociologists of course) – I add – share and follow, more or less, the same pattern, which means that they are not immune from taking some (or most) of predominant ideas/values/feelings/beliefs... (*social facts*) of the social/cultural milieus to which they belong for granted, and/or as their own personal things/mental constructions. The point of the Rickert's view is similar; he as well suggests that the influence of prevailing (he would not say "social facts" but) *cultural values* in a specific cultural (social) context is coercive, and almost unavoidable; even social scientists, who are supposed to be conscious of such affections, more often than not choose their subjects/topics, and shape their theoretical and methodological conceptions according to what is actually "*en vague*" in their socio-cultural surroundings. By the way, those abstract theoretical insights have become quite concrete, and recognizable and obvious/transparent in Serbia/Yugoslavia... whatever, relatively recently; during the nineties – when, instead of former communist collectivism, the collectivism(s) of the ethnic nationalism(s) have prevailed (as *social fact(s)*), namely, as general "cultural value(s)" in the milieu – most of people (in all former republics of Yugoslavia) have significantly, or even radically changed their systems/patterns of ideas/values/feelings/beliefs...; for instance, the majority of former internationalists have almost immediately become militant nationalists; former radical atheists have become very committed believers; most of former communists, even those who had used to declare themselves as communists *in their heart of hearts*, have as individuals (personally) become bizarre "amalgams" of *radical/militant nationalism, theism, and neoliberalism!*?! The social theorists (including some of sociologists) simply could not resist (coercive) influence of the new cultural values/social facts. But, that would be another story. (See about that in: Karel Turza, "Sociology without society? Yugoslav sociology after 1990", *Sociology in Central and Eastern Europe Transformation at the Dawn of a New Millennium*, Edited by Mike Forrest Keen and Janusz L. Mucha, Praeger, Connecticut, London, 2003, pp. 187-198). About the Durkheim's and Rickert's

Nevertheless, in my opinion, there is a (logical) way, namely, the *definiens* that provides overcoming *an inevitably unstable and ever changing* nature of modernity and, on the other hand, avoiding pitfalls of diversities in attempts/efforts to comprehend and define modernity that are brought about by the diversities of various cultural milieus. That is to say, there is though the *differentia specifica* (and, of course, the *genus proximum*) of modernity that can make the definition of modernity *adequate, accurate, not circular* (the *circulus vitiosus*, like: “modernity is a modern way of life”), *not negative* (like: “modernity is not a feudal socio-historical ideal and practical project”) and so on, namely, congruent to the main, generally (still) recognized logical rules.

So, the *differentia specifica* consists of the following (a) “objective-ontological” and (b) “subjective-ontological” attributes/conditions of modernity:

Ad a) New, postfeudal forms of private property, and market economy/commodity production;

Ad b) Individualism and rationality.

And the definition is: modernity is a wide ideal/spiritual and practical project that came into being in the period of the Renaissance in the city-states of Florence, Milan, Genoa, Venice, Rome... (“the south pole of the first European economy-world” – as Fernand Braudel defined that region), of which the main attributes/conditions – market economy/commodity production, and new (postfeudal) private property, and individualism and rationality – made up a historical form of long duration within which a permanent differentiation/heterogenization has been under way.

The latter means that modernity has existed so far in various modalities – ever since it came into being. That furthermore means that the main attributes/conditions have remained generally and at the most abstract level invariant, which means that they have (still) remained a general form/frame (a “set of rules”) within (under) which many concrete socio-historical and cultural entities have built their specific, often rather different (yet modern) contexts.

To clarify the latter thesis, an analogy could be useful; the analogy with chess. Chess is a very old game (much older than modernity, of course) with very precise and invariable (of long duration) set of rules (the laws of chess); yet, it still leaves a lot of room to the players to produce new combinations. To make the

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conceptions, see, e.g., in: Emile Durkheim, *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, F. Alcan, Paris, 1960, and Heinrich Rickert, *Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft*, J. C. B. Mohr (P. Siebeck), Tübingen, 1899. The idea of using both Durkheim (a positivist/sociological realist) and Rickert (an anti-positivist/sociological nominalist, and a representative of the so-called *verstehende Soziologie*) in clarifying this problem might seem, I admit, as a serious contradiction; but it is not. Why? Well, the answer would require a particular chapter (or even a book); so there is no room for it in this article.

analogy more specific, let us say that the “rules of game” (namely, the above mentioned attributes/conditions) of modernity, in a political sense only, have permitted, up to now, the existence of postfeudal city-states, then absolute monarchies, limited (parliamentary) monarchies, republics and, finally – an entirely new state/political entity: the EU. On the other hand, regarding economic aspects and facts, it (modernity) has, nota bene in its very early phase, namely, in the fifteenth, or – according to some historians – even in the fourteenth centuries, brought about many rules, ways and means, principles, and customs and habits that exist in contemporary business too, particularly in trade and banking. Some economic historians (e.g., A. Saporì) say that there is almost nothing in financial/banking and trade business that exists nowadays that could not be found in economy of the Renaissance.<sup>3</sup>

That might seem contradictory to the (above) story on political diversities within modernity, as well as to the final part of the definition of modernity in which differentiation is pointed out. But it is not so. On the contrary, the “paradox” reveals and confirms the fact that even “an everchanging phenomenon” still has some stable and fixed points which ultimately make it – definable. Politics generally should be treated as “an everchanging phenomenon” within modernity. For, e.g. democracy, a word, as well as a predominant cultural value/social fact familiar to most nowadays, has actually, as a practice, become familiar to most quite recently (the history of modern parliamentary democracy occupies a short period of the history of modernity “as such”!). However, many other “sectors” of modern systems of human interdependence (social/cultural milieus) have, over the past five or six centuries, remained similar; and not only in the economic “sector”, but as well in what could generally be regarded nowadays as private sphere – as a sphere of personal “life projects”, family life, mentality, emotions and so on and so forth.

Among many various conceptions of modernity (as well as of its origins) that have been developed over the past, say, 25 years, the one that is most similar to my view has been exposed in the works of Nikolas Rose. When dealing with the issue of individualism (“the individual”, or “individuality”, or subjectivity), for instance, although he suggests that individualism (or subjectivity) has its own history – namely, that the ways in which human beings understand themselves and act upon themselves and others do not fit into a linear historical narrative, nor do they emerge as a mere consequence of “more fundamental” changes elsewhere, e.g. in conditions of production, in family forms, in culture... – Rose confirms that the changes associated with modernity were “...the product of the Italian Renaissance of the

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<sup>3</sup> More about that, see in: Karel Turza, *Modernost na biciklu - Renesansa, Grad, Porodica (Modernity on a Bicycle – Renaissance, City, Family)*, Akademia nova, Beograd, 1996, str. (pp.) 148-151.

fifteenth century...”<sup>4</sup> And, those changes – he adds – “...destroyed the fixed social and cultural formations of community and kinship, which had defined the identity of subjects from outside, embedded the person within a stable order of status, within a transcendental and implacable cosmology, within a certain, even if imaginary, space and time. Such persons were not individuals in our modern sense; their personhood emerged from a collective sense of identity, their will was directed according to a traditional and unquestioned moral order, their consciousness was not a unique individual but of inhabitant of given destiny. With modernity, with the move from country to town, from stability and fixity to change and fluidity, from feudalism and agriculture to capitalism, commodity production and the sale of labour on the market, the person takes on a new form: that of the unique, conscious, responsible, atomized, discrete, bounded, coherent, choosing, acting individual equipped with a personal consciousness and a personal conscience. This person is a subject simultaneously of freedom – that is to say, fated to choose, and to shape his or her own life through everyday decisions as to conduct – and of responsibility – that is to say, the locus of address of moral, spiritual and commercial obligations concerning conduct.”<sup>5</sup>

Rose’s insights into the changes of subjectivity/individuality, and of the socio-historical (“external”) contexts that are associated with modernity are – as I have already put it – similar to my insights. Actually, his insights summarize quite well some parts of what I identified as objective-ontological and subjective-ontological attributes/conditions of modernity. Regarding the first, Rose’s “summary” embraces (almost) everything; except new, postfeudal forms of private property – that came into being through the so-called primary accumulation of capital, the process by which the predominant private property in the means of production in feudalism, based in the first place on ownership of land, was gradually disintegrated and decayed/destroyed.

In the “Italian”<sup>\*</sup> Renaissance, the so-called primary accumulation of capital occurred, approximately, as a process that was thoroughly described in the first volume of Karl Marx’s *Capital* (Marx had in mind the same process that had occurred in England). A more specific and to the issue I am dealing with now much more interesting analysis can be found, however, in *The Social History of Art* (vol. I), by Arnold Hauser<sup>6</sup>. For, Hauser’s insights include some aspects that are very

<sup>4</sup> Nikolas Rose, “Authority and the Genealogy of Subjectivity”, in: *Detraditionalization*, Edited by Paul Heelas, Scott Lash & Paul Morris, Blackwell Publishers, Cambridge Massachusetts, USA, Oxford, UK, 1996, p. 301.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 301-302.

\* “Italian” because Italy did not exist at the time (Italy was constituted in the 19th century, and when it happened its elite’s slogan was: “We made Italy; now we have to make the Italians!”).

<sup>6</sup> Arnold Hauser, *Socijalna istorija umetnosti i književnosti*, I, II, Kultura, Beograd, 1966.

interesting when compared with “ways and means”, the methods that are prevalent in contemporary transition (transformation) in Serbia/Yugoslavia, or Serbia and Montenegro (whatever).

In brief, according to Hauser (by the way, his analyses were rather influenced both by his intellectual mentor, Max Weber, and by Karl Marx), rationalization was the main axis of the then (first, emerging) capitalism. That is to say – in his words – the first actors of the so-called primary accumulation of capital (Hauser would say: of the “heroic capitalism”) were wild (and irrational of course) pirates, robbers, bandits, adventurers... who made, accumulated and kept their treasures. In the next generation they were replaced by their heirs who, however, “brought to life” the treasures; they transformed them into capital by investing in financial and trade business, rationally calculating the cost, namely, the risks, possible losses, etc.; in short, they transformed money into commodities, and commodities back into money. (In Marx’s words, private ownership of the means of production at the time took on a different form, and a diversity of goods became freely alienable. Essential to the process was the universalizing of commodity form, and the condition of such universalization was the development of a full-blown money economy, etc.) But, only their heirs – i.e., the third generation – could and really did enjoy all the benefits of their wealth, gained by themselves, and/or by their fathers and grandfathers; in other words, only they were those who lived in luxury, and only they could afford spending money in a manner of generous donors and Maecenas.<sup>7</sup>

Mentioning the cycle – of at least three generations within which (a) the so-called primary accumulation of capital, (b) rationalization of economic behaviour and, finally, (c) the “art of spending money” (the transformation of the heirs of pirates, robbers, adventurers... through rational bookmakers and businessmen into luxury consumers and donors/Maecenas) in the “Italian” Renaissance were accomplished – is in this context, as I have already said, interesting primarily in regard to some aspects of transitional/transferring processes that have been under way in Serbia/Yugoslavia, and/or Serbia/Montenegro (whatever) over the past 10-15 years. Why? Well, because a similar cycle has occurred in the milieu (Serbia/Yugoslavia; Serbia/Montenegro, whatever), but it has lasted scarcely some 10-15 years!?! For, most of the businessmen (or, better: “businessmen”\*), the

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<sup>7</sup> See about that in: A. Hauser, *op. cit.*, str. (p.) 278 *et passim*.

\* The “m” in the word *businessman* (*businessman*) is an ironic response of the ordinary people to the fact that those who have constituted new plutocracy (or, better: “kleptocracy”) in Serbia/Montenegro – those who have recently gained quite a lot of money and property in a, well, say, dubious way – still do not have a proper idea/knowledge to define/title their own (new) identity; in searching for it, most of them choose the word *businessman*; but since many of them do not speak English, they – when appear in public – often say: “I am a *businessman* (phonetically: *bizmismen*)”.

individuals and their families, have managed to transform themselves – during the period between 1991 and 2000/2003 – from criminal\*\* groups to a social group that possesses legal and recognized (legitimate) power/influence because of its reaches; the new businessmen (businessmen) have also, in fact very soon, become enthusiastic consumers of all sorts of luxuries, and (in some cases though) generous donors and patrons of art and science too.

Concerning subjective-ontological attributes/conditions of modernity, Rose's "summary" does not deal sufficiently with rationality; individualism (namely, subjectivity) is, on the other hand – as I have showed above – thoroughly analyzed in it. About the rise of rationality (and rationalization), Hauser's insights are very inspiring – and were quite helpful to me when I dealt with the issue (in the above mentioned book and article: *Modernity on a Bicycle*, and "What is modernity, and how is it mainly questioned?"). Yet, there is an important difference: in Hauser's conception Weber's idea of rationality – as a universal principle, and as "an anthropological invariant" – completely prevails; my understanding of rationality is based on the idea that reason (rationality) is historically constructed.<sup>8</sup>

It should be said here as well that there is no strict line that separates objective-ontological and subjective-ontological attributes/conditions of modernity in reality. For these are not mere descriptions, but primarily mental constructions/analytical tools which provide theoretical framework of analysis of modernity. That does not mean though that the attributes/conditions are entirely abstract (or even fictional); they are real, at least to the extent to which many other socio-theoretical notions/concepts (such as: capital, capitalism, division of labour, class, and so on and so forth) are – real.

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\*\* In Serbia/Yugoslavia, Serbia/Montenegro (whatever), *criminal* should be considered with a sense of *relativity*. For, during the nineties, owing to an unprecedented inflation (of 10 000 000 or even 15 000 000%!!!), literally all adult citizens of the FR Yugoslavia were pushed to break the law by selling and buying (illegally of course, on the black market) foreign currencies, becoming thus criminals; it was a state of *anomie* that went far beyond Durkheim's most pessimistic views of *anomie*. Such "relativization" of criminal (that lasted more than ten years!!!), by making it common and "natural" – which was just one aspect of *sociocidal* strategy of the then (Milošević's) power elite – has ultimately provided an alibi, a plausible proof of innocence to many of those who were real, *gross*, flagrant criminals (they usually justified their "business" endeavours by: "we all have to find a way to avoid/trick the international sanctions, to survive"; and, these words were almost always "completed" with: "...for the sake of Serbia and the Serbs"), and who have, more or less, managed to gain recognition/legitimacy up to now.

<sup>8</sup> This is, in a way, similar to Michel Foucault's understanding of rationality; see, e.g., in: Michel Foucault, "The Question of Method", in: Graham Burchell et al. (eds.), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991, p.79.



Now, let us see in brief what is going on within late, high, reflexive, second, new, third... (whatever) modernity.

According to the authors of those views of (contemporary) modernity, living in our current age cannot be properly comprehended without taking into account the two key categories/phenomena: risk and globalization.

In his book: *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*,<sup>9</sup> Ulrich Beck developed the main points of the concept of risk (in some other works, he has also dealt, extensively, with the relationship between risk and globalization). According to Beck, we live nowadays (second, new... modernity) in a global risk society, namely, in a world in which hazards are not restricted spatially, temporally or socially. Today's risks affect all countries and all social classes; they have global consequences. For instance, the explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine, in 1986, provides a clear illustration of this point. Actually, in our own age – as Anthony Giddens puts it – we are continually facing many forms of “manufactured risk” that concern human health and the environment, and which cross national boundaries: global warming, the BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy – known popularly as “mad cow disease”) crisis, the debate over GM (genetically modified) food etc.<sup>10</sup> So, the management of risk is the prime feature of the global order.

Risk and globalization, however, are not something that is simply “out there”. They are something that is as well “...an ‘in here’ phenomenon that affects our intimate and personal lives in many diverse ways”.<sup>11</sup> How? Namely, what is going on within new, late, second, reflexive... modernity regarding our personal lives, and even our intimacy?

Well, all fixed traditions and established customs and habits seem to be questioned as never before; by the breakdown of the stabilities of class and patterns of labour, many new uncertainties have entered the relationships between the sexes too; far more than earlier, individuals must supply them for themselves, import them into their own biographies through their own actions. “One has to win, know how to assert oneself in the competition for limited recourses – and not only once, but day after day. (...) The normal biography thus becomes the ‘elective biography’, the ‘reflexive biography’, and the ‘do-it-yourself biography’. (...) The do-it-yourself biography is always a ‘risk biography’...” “The do-it-yourself biography can swiftly

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<sup>9</sup> Ulrich Beck, *Risikogesellschaft: Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Mein, 1986. (A very good translation of the book appeared in FR Yugoslavia, in 2001: Ulrih Bek, *Rizično društvo*, “Filip Višnjić”, Beograd; an English translation appeared in 1992 – Sage, London – but it is a reduced version of Beck's original book).

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., in: Anthony Giddens, *Sociology*, Polity, Cambridge, 2001, chapter 3 (“A Changing World”).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 61.

become the breakdown biography” – “...owing to the wrong choice of career or just the wrong field, compounded by the downward spiral of private misfortune, illness, divorce, the repossessed home...”<sup>12</sup>

Zygmunt Bauman gives a precise description/diagnosis of those circumstances/uncertainties: “Nowadays everything seems to conspire against lifelong projects, permanent bonds, eternal alliances, immutable identities. I cannot build for the long term on my job, my profession or even my abilities. I can bet on my job being cut, my profession changing out of all recognition, my skills being no longer in demand. Nor can a partnership or family provide a basis in the future”.<sup>13</sup>

In these new circumstances, “identity is no longer experienced as a natural, coherent and unchanging attribute of the individual, but as the uncertain and fractured result of personal decisions and plans. Biography and identity become self-reflexive, to be constructed, worked upon, the outcome of choices – about clothes, marriage, relationships, diet – in which the individual himself or herself is the self-conscious centre of action”.<sup>14</sup>

Risk and globalization, and uncertainties that they hold, should not however be regarded as bogies, as evil spirits that cause nothing but the fears. Regarding globalization – as well as risk/uncertainty, and all other things that are connected with it – Giddens is right when writes: “globalization is changing the way the world looks, and the way we look at the world. By adopting a global outlook, we become more aware of our connections to people in other societies. We also become more conscious of the many problems the world faces at the start of the 21st century. The global perspective opens our eyes to the fact that our increasing ties with the rest of

<sup>12</sup> Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, “Individualization and ‘Precarious Freedoms’”, in: *Detraditionalization, op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in: Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>14</sup> Nikolas Rose, *op.cit.*, p. 302. It should be stressed here that in his article Rose calls in question some of the main theses about the distinctive features/attributes of late, reflexive, second etc. modernity (new identity shaped by risk and uncertainty; a move towards a new individualism under conditions of globalization; that nowadays increasingly everyone has to choose his/her social and self-identity and so on); in his words, almost all these themes are by no means new – as the authors such as Jacques Le Goff, Philippe Ariès, George Duby etc. have convincingly showed in their historical reconstructions, risk, uncertainty, the do-it-yourself biography..., have existed ever since modernity came into being, many centuries ago. An implicit answer to those objections offers Anthony Giddens when describes Beck’s theoretical thinking: “Beck is not arguing that the contemporary world is more risky than that of previous ages. Rather, it is the *nature* of the risks we must face that is changing. Risk now derives less from natural dangers than from uncertainties created by our own social development and by the development of science and technology”. (Anthony Giddens, *op. cit.*, p. 678.) There is no room in this article for analysing the disagreement; let us say though: they are both right, in a way.

the world means that our actions have consequences for others and that the world's problems have consequences for us".<sup>15</sup>

### The denials of modernity

Human beings have always been aware of the fact that they should not move incautiously when find themselves on the edge of a cliff, for instance, or an abyss, or the roof of a tall building, whatever; for if they slip, they will, owing to an unavoidable force, reach the ground in a certain time. Reaching the ground that way – human beings have always known that too – does not bring any good; on the contrary, it might be even fatal. Yet, it took about 1500 years – from Ptolemy, who first, in the 2nd century A.D., felt that there was something (a force/power) that caused the bodies/things fall on the ground, to Isaac Newton who, finally, revealed and formulated the “something”, in the 17th century – for the law of gravitation to be discovered. The Newton's discovery has changed the life on earth; among other things, it has enabled human beings to fly and, ultimately, to visit the moon. Before Newton, though they had been aware of the “something” that had inevitably directed their (of course, in the first place physical) behaviour in almost every sense, people could have only dreamt of interfering in and/or opposing the rules that the “something” had imposed upon them.

What does the law of gravitation have to do with modernity? Well, nothing really. The story about gravitation is told here only to illustrate the fact (truism) that human beings have lived their lives on earth often knowing nothing about the real nature of both natural forces and historical/social circumstances and processes that have, more or less, shaped the ways they have acted and thought.<sup>\*</sup> The truism concerns modernity too; for, before it was conceptualized, in the 20th century, it had existed as a “wide ideal/spiritual and practical project” for at least four centuries.<sup>\*\*</sup> The curious thing about that is that it still has not become part of common knowledge – even among social theorists (or it is not strange at all, when we have in

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<sup>15</sup> Anthony Giddens, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>\*</sup> Just one short excursion: It would be very interesting I think to find out how many people in the contemporary world, i.e. in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, know that the law of gravitation exists at all. It would be quite interesting as well to find out what percentage of the people who travel by airplane know what the law says. By the way, companies like TWA, Lufthansa, British Airways, Swissair, Quantas, Alitalia, Austrian Airlines and so on and so forth, could easily get such information by a simple questionnaire. The result would be, well, amazing I believe.

<sup>\*\*</sup> A similar story could be told about many other things/phenomena – about *capitalism*, for instance. Capitalism had existed long before it was conceptualized, defined, and before the term itself came to be widely used (in the later nineteenth century).

mind the law of gravitation, which, there is no doubt about that, is far more “obvious” to human beings).

In fact, in some milieus theoretical critiques of modernity had started even before it was reflected, conceptualized and/or defined. In some cases the critiques had appeared even before the term was recognized and used as a common word with a more or less definite meaning; for instance, among some philosophers and social theorists in Serbia/Yugoslavia over the past 20-25 years, it has been, well, say, in/trendy to speak about the end of modernity or, simply (in Lyotard’s words) about “la condition postmoderne”, and in connection with it, about the meaning of, for example, (Derrida’s) “la déconstruction”, “la différance” etc. – though modernity has been actually far away from the milieu, especially in its practice.

Among theoretical denials of modernity it is only postmodern thought that still deserves serious attention and consideration. Some others have been put on margins of the contemporary *Zeitgeist* (the main stream of thought) – e.g. Marxism which has drastically lost its significance, or has even sunk into oblivion (temporarily?), especially in former communist countries since 1989 – or have never really gained an important role in questioning modernity.<sup>16</sup> Yet, I do not believe that dealing with postmodernity would bring about any profit in this context; so let us see the meaning of the practical denials of modernity.

Every practical denial of modernity implies a practical negation of some of its main attributes/conditions – or of all of them. The example of the latter are former communist countries, in which:

- a) instead of new, postfeudal forms of private property, state – or the so-called social (like in former Yugoslavia) – ownership prevailed;
- b) instead of market economy, a centrally planned economy existed;
- c) individualism was suppressed by a specific form of collectivism, and
- d) rationality was inhibited by ideology, and/or by the so-called substantive rationality.\*

<sup>16</sup> About the latter, see, for example, in Karel Turza: *Luis Mumford – Jedna kritika modernosti (Lewis Mumford – A Critique of Modernity)*, Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, Beograd, 1998.

\* I do not use the concept (*substantial rationality*) in the sense in which Max Weber used it (e.g. in his: *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft – Economy and Society*). Substantial rationality here primarily means that in some systems of human interdependence there is an instance (a leader/*führer*, or a party, or an oligarchic elite...) that has, legitimate or illegitimate (all the same), monopoly over making decisions about what is and what is not true, and what is good and what is not good, and what are and what are not genuine, both immediate and strategic/historical interests of individuals, social groups, strata and classes, entire society and, sometimes, of the entire world’s population. (It might seem ridiculous today, but the communists were convinced that socialism/communism was a historically inevitable worldwide process that would, some day, win a victory over capitalism in every part of the world.) In former communist countries such substantial rationality was justified in

Another example (Germany under the rule of the National Socialist Party) shows that modernity can as well be denied – partially. For in Hitler’s Germany (1933-1945), individualism was replaced by collectivism, market economy was replaced by centrally planned economy (“war economy”), but private ownership over the means of production still existed; it remained (though, if the regime had lasted longer, I think that it would have been, sooner or later, replaced by a variety of state ownership); regarding rationality, it was suppressed by (Nazi) ideology/substantial rationality of course, but in a specific, perverse way. That is to say, Nazi substantial rationality was more often than not “dressed” in a costume of formal rationality; the state apparatus was keenly interested and engaged in putting (“dressing”) literally all political/administrative decisions (even, e.g., those

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many ways, for instance, by the famous Marx’s (and Engels’) thesis from *The Communist Manifesto* that (I paraphrase it) proletarians do not have any particular, but a very clear and definite universal human interest. Whoever was within former communist countries recognized as the one who opposed (or inclined not to believe in) that historical and world wide mission of the dictatorship of the proletariat (and its avant-garde, Communist party), namely, who was in any sort of disagreement with that *substantially rational Truth*, had to take the consequences (from being stigmatized in public and/or loosing the job, through spending years in a concentration camp, to being tortured and/or killed). The similar consequences were brought about by another substantial rationality (of German National Socialist Party); the “similar” actually means that both regimes killed millions for the sake of their substantial rationality (their “Truth”). In my understanding, the opposite of *substantial* is *formal* rationality (again not in Weber’s sense). In brief, *formal rationality* is based on recognizing and respecting certain “rules of game(s)”, such as formal procedures that are the distinctive feature of modern *democracies*. It does not have to be stressed again that that (political) aspect of modern *formal rationality* came into being relatively recently. On the other hand, within *modern* economy, formal rationality has a long history. For instance, recognizing/respecting the law – *rule of game* – of supply and demand, that came into being in its full sense simultaneously with modern market economy, many centuries ago, has strategically provided economic successfulness; however, those who have ignored or opposed that “rule of game” – as individuals or at a level of national economies – have, sooner or later, experienced the bankrupt (as individuals, or as countries/states, or as a general project – e.g., communism). Etc. At last, it should be said here that regarding contemporary (late, high, second, reflexive... whatever) modernity, one of its main achievements – namely, its *political* formal rationality – has been, in some cases, seriously diminished, or even ignored/abandoned over the past several years. For it is obvious nowadays that the USA (and their allies, Great Britain in the first place, as well as Germany...) do not strictly respect any more the *formal rationality* of their own legal systems, neither of the legal system of the international community (UN). Thus it seems that we are facing now – after the collapse, in 1989, of Soviet-style communism, which, by the way, was in itself a synonym of *substantial rationality*, and within globalization (whatever it means) – a new form of *substantial rationality*, that could be (again) expressed in recognizable phrases: “we (that is to say: *we who are the West*) know what is the Truth, and thus what is good for the world in general as well as for every single part of the world, for every single country/state, for every single society/culture and, ultimately, even for every single individual on earth!?! This implies an intrinsically malign message: “Those who are not with us, they are against us, and will take the consequences – economic sanctions, or bombing, or wider military action including occupation...; in any case: living in penury...” Well, this is frightening, isn’t it?

concerning time tables of the trains by which the Jews, and the others who were not substantially in harmony with the Nazi project, were transported to the concentration camps) into a legal form (“costume”). Thus, as I have said, it was a perverse and therefore an intrinsically anti-modern variety of formal rationality.

That is why I do not agree with Zygmunt Bauman (whose theoretical corpus otherwise I do appreciate very much) when he blames modernity for, e.g., the Holocaust. As he puts it: “...the Holocaust was not an antithesis of modern civilization and everything (or so we like to think) it stands for”. It was just another face of modernity “...whose other, more familiar, face we so admire. (...) The two faces are perfectly comfortably attached to the same body. What we perhaps fear most is that each of the two faces (of modernity – K. T.) can no more exist without the other than can the two sides of a coin”.<sup>17</sup>

The main reason of my disagreement is his concept of modernity which is simply inadequate: sometimes too wide, though in some aspects quite narrow. In my opinion, he has not recognized those political/social/historical actors/phenomena/processes etc. that have been intrinsically anti-modern as anti-modern, because his concept of modernity lacks clear and definite criteria of what is and what is not modern. That is why Bauman understands the Holocaust (and Nazi Power, and Stalinism, and the Gulag) just as another face of modernity (“another side of a coin”), and not as a very anti-modern project/endeavour. It is illustrative indeed when he writes (in fact, quotes Freingold): “Auschwitz was also a mundane extension of the modern factory system. Rather than producing goods, the raw material was human beings and the end-product was death, so many units per day marked carefully on the manager’s production chart. (...) The brilliantly organized railroad grid of modern Europe carried a new kind of raw material to the factories. It did so in the same manner as with other cargo. (...) Engineers designed the crematoria; managers designed the system of bureaucracy that worked with a zest and efficiency...” Etc. Yet, all these words do not offer any convincing reason what modernity in itself has to be blamed for.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, “The Century of Camps”, in: *The Bauman Reader*, Edited by Peter Beilharz, Blackwell Publishers, Massachusetts, USA, Oxford, UK, 2001, p. 236. By the way, another theoretical (also postmodern) critique of modernity – that of Jacques Derrida – was similar in a way. Derrida accuses modern rationality for being responsible for all disasters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century totalitarisms; yet, on the other hand – as Manfred Frank showed, in his *Conditio moderna* (Reclam Verlag, Leipzig, 1993; Serbian translation: Svetovi, Novi Sad, 1995, str. (p.) 126) – Derrida praises Heidegger’s indifference about the victims of Auschwitz as a sign of his philosophical superiority, as a sign of his indifference towards *responsibility* as an unacceptable modern (*logocentric*) category.

<sup>18</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *op. cit.*, p. 237. In that view modernity is reduced: a) to industry/industrialization (as a mater of fact, many authors mistakenly regard industrialization as the main attribute/condition – or, as Giddens puts it, *axis* – of modernity, or even equate modernity with industrialization). Industrialization in itself can, however, exist without having any real connection with modernity –

In short, the crucial question here is: what (or who) did though stop that, and all other monstrous Nazi projects? If all those (monstrous) things had really been *modern*, and/or *inherent to modernity*, they would have lasted, together with their producers (Nazi and their state, the Third Reich) much longer, because there would not have been any real force *within modernity* (or, better, *inherent to modernity*) to defeat them; fortunately, the force, a *modern* force, did exist and did defeat them.

At last, I do not praise modernity as an ideal, coherent, monolithic and incontrovertible project; on the contrary.\* For modernity is – as Jürgen Habermas has already said – “an unfinished project”, and thus a controversial historical conglomerate. However, it is a project that still has no acceptable, and/or plausible alternative nowadays, even in theory. That is why I insist on clear and precise seeing, recognizing and understanding well the difference between modern and anti-modern theories and practices: ideas, phenomena, forces, processes...

## Serbia and modernity

### *Few notes on the earlier times*

The story about Serbia and modernity – whatever the story might deal with and whatever it ultimately means – actually coincides with the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, this sentence would be correct in regard to almost all parts of the Balkans, especially those that were, for about five hundred years, parts of the Ottoman empire.

According to some historical analyses,<sup>19</sup> in the period from the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (when the Ottoman/Turkish military expansion and the conquest of the Balkans was finished) – in which period, by the way, the main attributes/conditions of modernity (or, at least, their main features) were already shaped and established in Florence, Venice, Rome, Milan etc. (and in some parts of

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like it did exist in the USSR, for instance – and industrial products as such can be used in many ways; e.g., one can use an airplane – as a supreme product of (modern) industry – to destroy a skyscraper in New York city, causing the death of several thousand men, women and children, but the usage of airplane does not mean that such an insane act is modern, and b) ultimately to a perverted pattern of rationality, which might have eternal varieties (the paranoiacs, for example, construct sometimes very systematic, sophisticated, convincing and *in appearance* rational stories, aren't they? Yet, their stories are in fact irrational, nothing but systematic delusions, and can, sometimes, as is well known, have quite dangerous practical effects.)

\* I wrote about the *Thanatos* aspects of modernity in: *Luis Mamford – jedna kritika modernosti, op. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., in: Sima Ćirković, *Rabotnici, Vojnici, Duhovnici (Toilers, Soldiers, Spirits)* Equilibrium, Beograd, 1997, str. (pp.) 23, 25 *et passim*.

the then North-Western Europe) – some, though rudimentary elements of the coming modernity appeared in the Balkans too. For example, it was money (“the metamorphosed shape of all other commodities” – as Marx defined it well) which was coined by the then rulers (mainly despots) in some parts of the region rationally, namely, with a clear idea that it would improve economy and bring about more wealth. Owing to that, there were, not many though, urban centers/markets in which money gradually replaced sheep, cows, oxen etc. – that had been used as “money” in the then still prevailing barter economy. Yet, this was not sufficient at all to enable realization of the project of modernity in the Balkans area. As S. Ćirković puts it, Balkan was generally an undeveloped region,<sup>20</sup> and when the Turks established their rule over it, even those modest elements – that might have otherwise turned into new, postfeudal form of property, market economy, rationality and individualism, particularly if the connections with the Western, primarily “Italian” cities of the Renaissance had been intensive\* – were blocked and scarcely maintained. For, while the Ottoman empire existed the life of most (non-Turks) in the Balkans was more or less reduced to mere survival.

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Ever since 1804, throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Serbia continually fought for its liberty attempting to get free from the Turkish government (in fact, the wars against the Turks lasted until 1913). Simultaneously with spreading of the free territories, its political framework was constituted, its economy was, slowly though, transformed from barter to a rudimentary market economy, the Serbian society was gradually shaped and structured. All these processes occurred, however, under the conditions that were very much burdened by a heritage that was intrinsically premodern/traditional and, in addition, contaminated by permanent antagonisms and by latent or actively violent enmities between the domestic people and the Turks – and that, as I have already put it, had lasted about five hundred years! That, certainly not fortunate, heritage affected literally every aspect of both individual and collective life of the Serbs, and had, more often than not, an active role in shaping their attitudes towards many (or most of) things with which further historical processes, up to now, have challenged them.

There is no need now, I think, for making wider diachronic comparisons in order to prove that the Balkan countries, including Serbia of course, have not been in favour of history; not only in regard to modernity, but – generally. As a matter of

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, str. (p.) 23. Another important thing did not exist in the Balkans: continuity of urban centers and urban life as such. See about that: *ibidem*, str. (pp). 259-274.

\* The case of Dubrovnik confirms that this might be a realistic assumption.



fact, the Balkan region as such has, in the meantime, become a synonym (and/or a stereotyped pattern) of something that should (or had better) be, by all means, avoided, as a social, cultural, economic, political... whatever model. There is, by the way, an interesting illustration of that: at the page 118, in the *New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language*,<sup>21</sup> it is written: “balkanize, *v.t.* – *balkanized, balkanizing* (...) to partition, as an area, into various small, politically ineffective divisions *which often display hostility among themselves*”. (Well, since the dictionary was published in 1975, I must admit that the authors were real prophets; for they did not only anticipate, but they did have a clear preview of what would really happen in Balkan/Yugoslavia during the nineties!)

In a diachronic/historical sense – concerning the main attributes of modernity, at least – the Balkan countries, including Serbia of course, were, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, several centuries late. More than 80% of the population was engaged in agriculture; market/money economy barely existed (e.g., Serbia did not have its own money until 1873, when dinar became its national currency; until then, 39 – according to some other sources, 43 – foreign currencies had been in use in Serbia\*); semi feudal form of ownership prevailed (private property in the means of production was based predominantly on ownership of land); rationality and individualism did not exist at all.

## The 20<sup>th</sup> Century Serbia

### *Part I*

The story about Serbia and modernity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century could be divided in various ways and in several parts – e.g., Serbia between 1900 and 1918; Serbia in the first Yugoslavia (the monarchy that existed from 1918 to 1941); Serbia in the second (communist) Yugoslavia (between 1945 and, say, 1992, when the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, consisted of Serbia and Montenegro, was constituted) and, finally, Serbia in the State Unity of Serbia and Montenegro (since January 2003 up

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<sup>21</sup> College Edition, Consolidated New Publishers, Chicago-New York, 1975.

\* See about that in: Milan Vujović, “Akcionarstvo u jugoslovenskoj privredi” (“Joint-stock companies in Yugoslav economy”), in: *Jugoslovenska država, 1918-1998, Zbornik radova sa naučnog skupa (The Yugoslav State, 1918-1998, Congress Proceedings)*, Institut za savremenu istoriju, Beograd, 1999, str. (p.) 344. Many interesting information about the issue can be found in: Danica Milić, “Monetarnokreditni sistem u privredi Srbije početkom XX veka” (“Monetary and credit system in the economy of Serbia in early 20<sup>th</sup> century”), in: *Srbija u modernizacijskim procesima XX veka (Serbia in the Modernization Processes of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century)*, Naučni skup, Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, Beograd, 1994, str. (pp.) 79-89.

to now). This concrete formal division could be useful in another context (if, for instance, some legal, or political elements were in the focus of attention); for our purpose though, it would be too fractional. Thus, since modernity can be fully comprehended only in terms of long duration, my division will be quite rough: Serbia before World War II, and Serbia after World War II – up to now.

Regarding economy, many authors have showed so far that in the period up to 1941, some significant changes did occur in Serbia;\* in short, some main elements of capitalism were gradually developed in it. Yet, all in all, Serbian economy actually stagnated in the period. Between about 1918 and 1939 only, the average annual national income per capita remained extremely low (it rose until 1929, at an annual rate of some 3%, but in the period between 1930 and 1934 it fell by 7%). The role of agriculture and industry in the gross domestic product remained almost the same; in connection with that, the ratio of the population that was engaged in agriculture decreased only by about 7%, from nearly 80% to some 73% – though in absolute terms it increased!<sup>22</sup> Foreign capital was absolutely insufficient for intense industrialization, and Serbia remained a primarily agrarian country in which, however, most, namely those who were engaged in agriculture, were burdened by debts that they could not repay.

Such socio-economic circumstances were not at all suitable for developing the main *objective-ontological* attributes/conditions of modernity, namely, for new, postfeudal forms of private property and market economy. They, as well as the then general socio-historical, cultural, political etc. environment, were not, of course, appropriate for developing another, *subjective-ontological* pair of the main attributes/conditions of modernity – individualism and rationality – either. Regarding the latter, rationality was, as a matter of fact, encouraged at least by the need of those who were engaged in trading, industry, financial endeavours etc. to calculate rationally in order to gain profit; and a kind of individualism did come into being simultaneously with that, particularly with the need of a new emerging social stratum, of the then coming bourgeois to form its specific self-identity. Yet, in

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\* For example, capital market appeared; joint-stock companies, especially in the sphere of industry and finances, became common; foreign capital was invested in industry, mining, smelting works, electrical industry etc.; private property over the means of production was predominant... (See in: Milan Vujović, *op.cit.*, str. (pp.) 341-359. In her article (mentioned above), D. Milić praises monetary and credit system in the economy of Serbia at the turn of the century as an almost built modern economic system (“In the economic life of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Serbia considerable changes marked its transition to the commodity economy and subsequently to an industrial society”; Danica Milić, *op. cit.*, str. (p.) 89). Considerable changes did occur, it is true; yet, they should be seen *cum grano salis*, namely, as changes that affected just one, quite narrow part of the then Serbian (still semi feudal, traditional, undeveloped...) society.

<sup>22</sup> See about that in: Kosta Mihailović, “Privreda Jugoslavije 1920-1990” (“Yugoslav Economy 1920-1990”), in: *Jugoslovenska država 1918-1998, op.cit.*, str. (pp.) 89-123.

Serbia, as a predominantly agrarian/traditional milieu, these elements were too weak to initiate and/or accelerate the main patterns of modernity.

There have been, by the way, many attempts – mainly in literature, or in some historical and/or political/ideological reconstructions – to present Serbia before World War II as a semi developed modern civil society. Such stories are simply false. Usually, they have been nothing but individual expressions of nostalgia – wistful longings for an imagined past; or have been (and still are) instrumental ideological illusions consciously constructed in the ideological confrontations with the communist regime – either in the period of communism or now – in order to emphasize, and to exaggerate of course, all evils and misfortunes the communist regime brought about. To confirm that the stories are not true much information could be added. There is no need for that though, I think; yet, just few more things.

Less than 10% of the population of Serbia at the time were craftsmen, or worked in factories and mines (the percentage includes those who were dependent upon them, i.e. members of their families and/or households); most of the population was illiterate; the then cultural policy remained poorly organized, ideologized and parochial, and political life, which was pluralistic (both Serbia and – after 1918 – the first Yugoslavia were parliamentary/constitutional monarchies), was in fact a mere simulacrum of modern democracy shaped, by the way – as were all other aspects of the social, economic, cultural... life in the milieu – by *substantially rational* interests of numerous fractions of the political elite, that is to say, political life was commonly far from being shaped by “rules of game” of *formal* (political) *rationality*.<sup>\*</sup> In her article “Political elite and modernization in the first decade of the independent Serbian state”, Latinka Perović correctly summarizes the real nature of politics in Serbia. Though she deals with a relatively short period, her ideas have much wider meaning and are heuristically fruitful for understanding political life in

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\* For more information about the issues see the following articles (published in: *Srbija u modernizacijskim procesima XX veka, op. cit.*): a) Mira Bogdanović, “Modernizacijski procesi u Srbiji u XX veku” (“Modernization processes in Serbia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century”), str. (pp.) 35-58; b) Ljubodrag Dimić, “Kulturna politika i modernizacija jugoslovenskog društva, 1918-1941” (“Cultural policy and modernization of the Yugoslav society, 1918-1941”), str. (pp.) 193-209 ; c) Latinka Perović, “Politička elita i modernizacija u prvoj deceniji nezavisnosti srpske države” (“Political elite and modernization in the first decade of the independent Serbia”), str. (pp.) 235-245. Etc. It should be stressed here that most of articles published in *Serbia in the Modernization Processes of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, when the book appeared (1994), were a real refreshment for the Serbian/Yugoslav social-scientific community. For – owing to Latinka Perović, in the first place, who was the *spiritus movens* of the endeavour/conference/publication – the issue of modernity was finally brought into focus of some Serbian/Yugoslav historians, social scientists and intellectuals. It should be stressed here too that many (if not the majority) of the then influential and prominent Serbian intellectuals ignored the publication, being convinced that it had nothing to do with – or was even contra-productive in regard to – the strategic interests of the Serbs at the time; in fact, with an aggressive (substantially rational) ethno-nationalistic project.

Serbia throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century too. In brief – as she puts it – “modernization for Serbia is the same as its Europeization. That is what Serbian political elite (became) divided over after Serbia became independent. One larger part, organized in the Radical Party, tended to build the state and society based on traditional Serbian institutions and relied on Russia. The other part, consisting of the Liberal and Progressive Party, wanted to make Serbia the country modeled after European states. That division was visible about every issue, and most pronounced was when construction of the first railroad in Serbia was concerned”.<sup>23</sup> By the way, until 1884, Serbia, together with Montenegro, was the only European state without a railroad! The decision that the railroad would be built was made in the Serbian parliament after a long lasting and rough debate; many members of the Parliament were decisively against the railroad because it would – in their opinion – disintegrate traditional Serbian way of life and would bring to Serbia “chains of a new slavery”!?!

Finally, a very important obstacle to establishing historical form of modernity (particularly the aspect of its subjective-ontological attributes/conditions, namely, rationality and individualism) in the milieu was lack of urban centers and generally urban way of life in Serbia. As I showed elsewhere, in the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, when modernity historically came into being, urban centers and urbanity were its “natural” soil.<sup>24</sup>

So, all in all, though some new forms of private property over the means of production did appear in Serbia at the turn of the centuries, and especially in the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and although some elements of modern market/money economy and commodity production did come into being, the Serbian society in the period remained an undeveloped, predominantly agrarian and fundamentally traditional/premodern ambient. Obstacles to all aspects of modernization were numerous and very hard to remove. The “embryo” of modernity – that in spite of all appeared then – was, however, terminated by World War II, namely, by the communist revolution that occurred in it.

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<sup>23</sup> Latinka Perović, “Politička elita i modernizacija u prvoj deceniji nezavisnosti srpske države”, *op. cit.*, str. (p.) 245.

<sup>24</sup> See: Karel Turza, *Modernost na biciklu (Modernity on a Bicycle)*, *op. cit.* The city-states of the “Italian” Renaissance were places where it first appeared. It should be stressed here that cities/urban centers alone do not bring about modernity – automatically. There were in Europe at the time some developed and very rich cities (Augsburg for instance, about which Michel Montaigne exposed lucid observations/remarks in his *Journal de voyage*) in which, however, modern individualism and rationality (and all other things that are in a modern system of human interdependence connected with them) barely existed. The fact is important because some authors consider urbanization in itself (some other consider/treat industrialization in the same way, as I have mentioned above) as an unquestionable indication, or even certain proof that modernity exists. That is not true though.

## The 20<sup>th</sup> Century Serbia

### *Part II*

After 1945, Serbia remained in the so-called second, communist Yugoslavia as one of its six republics (the others were: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Slovenia). While in the pre-war period the obstacles to (and the denials of) modernity in Serbia had always had a legitimate and legal, both objective-ontological and subjective-ontological opposition (no matter how strong or weak it actually was), when the communists came in power, in 1945, all ideas about market economy, private ownership over the means of production, and about (formal) rationality and individualism became more or less illegitimate, politically unacceptable/inappropriate, and – illegal, namely, forbidden, in theory/ideology and practice! This (*nota bene*) does not mean that the term *modernity* (or *modernization*) was proscribed; on the contrary. Since modernity (modernization) was more commonly, though wrongly of course, understood as a synonym of industrialization and/or urbanization – the processes that were the main hall-marks of a “brave new” anti-capitalist, anti-bourgeois, anti-imperialist, anti-consumerist, desalinated and, above all, human etc. world, a world in which there would be no more exploitation of the working class/the proletariat (“a real producer of the surplus value which, however, in capitalism, had no share in its distribution and appropriation”), in which classless, harmonious, desalinated etc. community would replace the contemporary class divided, alienated and fundamentally inhuman societies etc. – it (namely, modernity/modernization), comprehended that way, was warmly embraced and enthusiastically encouraged in the communist regimes.

In fact, denying modernity – in theory, or better, in ideology and practices of all former communist countries, including of course Serbia/Yugoslavia after 1945 – was systematic and almost absolute. For (as I already put it; see previously in this article), instead of market economy, a centrally planned economy was established; instead of private ownership over the means of production, state (or the so-called social, self-management) ownership prevailed; individualism was suppressed by a specific collectivism, by the “we”, namely, by the proletariat – and the Communist Party as its avant-garde – that had no any particular, but a universal human interests and, concerning that, a clear and definite, historically predetermined mission which had to be realized. (Those who were not the proletarians – the peasants and the so-called straight intellectuals – should have been an active part of the “working people”, that is to say, their personal life-projects, their individual ambitions, wishes, desires and aims had to be adjusted to, and always in accordance with the general, strategic, historical and so on and so forth interests of the proletariat). Finally,

instead of rationality, ideology prevailed; in fact, a *substantial rationality* that did not tolerate at all any doubt about its truthfulness about everything.\*

So, ever since 1945 modernity in Serbia (and Yugoslavia) has not been denied nominally; on the contrary, the term was in favour of the then communist political oligarchy! It was – as was in all other former communist/Bolshevik countries – denied factually and fundamentally. In other words, modernity as a historical project of which (to say it again) the main attributes/conditions are: *market/money economy* (and *commodity production*), *new (postfeudal) forms of private property*, *individualism* and *rationality*, was in all communist regimes, including Serbia/Yugoslavia after 1945, systematically thwarted; the “embryo” of modernity was de(con)structed for the sake of another, Bolshevik project or, better (as was confirmed by the events in 1989) – an utopia. Thus, the phrase “socialist (or communist) modernization” – which is, by the way, quite common among historians, social theorists etc. who deal with Yugoslavia/Serbia and/or with communism in general – is nothing but the *contradictio in adjecto*.

There is no need now, I think, for analysing, nor even describing more extensively the period between 1945 and 1990, because all the facts about, e.g. the economy, state and politics/ideology, legal system, culture, society... in Serbia/Yugoslavia would be more or less in accordance with that general assertion. This of course might seem as – and in fact is – a simplification; for the *Lebenswelt* (life world) in all mentioned aspects of the then Serbian system of human interdependence surely was much more complex than even the most complex theoretical insight and understanding could comprise. But, the data/information such as: “after World War II Serbia entered upon the period of economic development: the average annual growth of the national income between 1947 and 1990 was 4,5%...”; or “between 1952 and 1990 the number of the employed rose from 103 to 280 per 1000 inhabitants...”, or “Serbia turned from an agricultural into an industrial society” and so on and so forth, have no greater significance when viewed in the context (of an anti-modernity) and, especially, when one knows historical epilogue of the Serbian (and the Yugoslav) anti-modernity; the epilogue which was – tragic. Thus, what still is interesting from the contemporary point of view is the period from 1990 up to now.

While all other former communist countries in Europe (including the USSR/Russia) started the transition/transformation in 1989/1990, in accordance with the main attributes/conditions of modernity, in Serbia/Yugoslavia “*la danse macabre*” started: a horrible sociocidal process that destroyed almost everything. The disaster began in 1991, with the wars in Slovenia and Croatia; in Bosnia and Herzegovina it started in April 1992.

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\* See about *substantial* (and *formal*) *rationality* foot-note previously in this article.

In all those wars – probably the cruelest conflicts in Europe during the last few centuries – in which “Serbia did not take part” (as Slobodan Milošević cynically keeps on saying even today), about half a million people were murdered or wounded, about 2 million people lost their homes. Regarding Serbia only, since 1991, hundreds of thousands of young educated people have fled abroad, millions have been pauperized, the economy, culture, health care, education, science..., have all been destroyed.

The Third Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro – a sad reminiscence of the country that was probably doomed to disappear!?!), primarily due to a destructive anti-modern project of which the producer was Slobodan Milošević and his entourage (together with a part of the Serbian intellectual elite), remained nothing but a mere ruin, a simulacrum of a nation-state, a country without society.

The title role in that project had an aggressive “ethno-nationalistic” politics, a variety of collectivism which replaced former (communist/proletarian) collectivism, and by which modern individualism was (again) suppressed. Actually, Milošević did manage to mobilize and engage all the worst parts of the Serbian anti-modern tradition that had had long history in the milieu, in political, economic, cultural/spiritual etc. sense. On the other hand, he and his entourage allowed a kleptocratic primary accumulation of capital (as is described above; see; pp. 8-9), which process ultimately brought about total pauperization of most, and of which the final result was *sociocide* (or *destroyed society* – as some other authors define that<sup>25</sup>).

In short, sociocide means that the social structure was reduced to a rudimentary division between the elite and the masses; the very concrete everyday life of the majority of population was reduced to mere survival, accompanied by spiritual, cultural etc. impoverishment/devastation.

When the DOS (Democratic Opposition of Serbia) came to power, after the 5<sup>th</sup> October 2000, Serbia was nothing but a deserted country, a country without society (*sensu stricto*), and with a state apparatus that was deeply connected with organized crime. So all attempts of the new government to initiate and realize the changes that should have been done in order to renew the institutions of the state and society, and to make them modern, faced almost irremovable obstacles within many segments of the old regime that remained vigorous and influential. When Dr. Zoran Đinđić finally tried to make some radical changes in those segments, he was killed.

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<sup>25</sup> See, e.g. in: Mladen Lazić, *Razaranje društva – jugoslovensko društvo u krizi devedesetih (The Destruction of Society – the Yugoslav Society in Crisis in the Nineties)* Filip Višnjić”, Beograd, 1994; or in: *Račji hod (Crab’s Walk)*, ed. Mladen Lazić, “Filip Višnjić”, Beograd, 2000.

An analysis of the period after the assassination of the Prime Minister of Serbia would prove, I think, that the pro-modern and anti-modern rival groups still are at war in Serbia. The outcome of that cannot be predicted though.