

**“SOCIO-POLITICAL AND SCIENTIFIC THOUGHT AND
ACTIVITY OF SIMA MARKOVIC”, (ed. Aleksandar Kostić)
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The political and scientific thought of intellectual, scientist, mathematician and tragically deceased politician, Sima Markovic, until now was unfairly neglected in Serbian science for ideological reasons. Sima Markovic, unfortunately belongs to the constellation of scientists who, even after their death were victims of political ostracism. Born in Kragujevac in the middle of the 19th century, as a child he showed multiple talents, he continued his education in Belgrade and he did his PhD (doctorate) in mathematics under the supervision of the famous Mihailo Petrovic (Mika Alas). The university career of Sima Markovic was suddenly interrupted when he decided to devote himself to politics. As one of the founders of the Communist Party he was highly respected in party circles, but his belonging to the right faction was never forgiven, and he infamously died in Stalin's purges in 1939. Sima Markovic was rehabilitated in 1958, but to this day whensomeone mentions his name it is usually only within the context of science. This anthology “Socio-Political and Scientific Thought and Activity of Sima Markovic”[1] published by SANU is a major contribution to the enlightenment of the character and work of Sima Markovic. The proceedings volume is 257 pages and includes twenty scientific papers which clearly show who actually Dr. Sima Markovic was.

Vladimir Stojančević in his work explores the suggestions offered by Sima Markovic regarding the solution of the Macedonian question. This issue was a stumbling block pertaining to the border that was built by the Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks, and Sima Markovic saw the solution and overcoming of the Macedonian problem in autonomy, as Stojančević, points out. In fact, he perceived Macedonia as a member of the “fraternal union of the Balkan peoples” (p. 17), and as a full member of them-Self. In fact, Sima Markovic saw peace in the Balkan “powder keg” only through the joint alliance of the Balkan nations that would include Macedonia, which after the peace Treaty of Bucharest was “dismembered into three parts.”

The only problem in the Balkan cohesion that Markovic saw was in European capitalism, resulting in the conclusion that the Macedonian question must (still) be resolved through a “struggle of the proletariat.” In the interpretation of the

Macedonian question, but not as a historiographical interpretation, Kosta Čavoški analyzes the time in which Sima Markovic lived in terms of the abuse of the national question in the spirit of Marxism. Čavoški actually indicates the hypocritical attitude of the Comintern in terms of national issues, because an independent political judgment for which Sima Markovic strove was not allowed, but insisted on unquestioning execution of directives from Moscow. It meant that “different circumstances may represent very different views on the same national question” (p. 40). Čavoški believes that Markovic made the first big political mistake when, although acknowledging Stalin’s definition of nation, he challenged its originality[2], which was followed by the vanity of the “communist father.” The intellectual morality of Sima Markovic came into conflict with the Stalin mindset although Markovic was the only politician in our region concludes Cavoski who publicly debated with him between the two world wars. This bold position of Markovic was the reason for his miserable death in Stalin’s purges in 1939.

Of great importance to elucidate the ideological and political views of Sima Markovic is the work prepared by Nikita Bondarev of the Russian Institute of Strategic Research in Moscow. Namely Bondarev managed with the help of valuable information from Russian archives to illuminate some of the circumstances of Sima Markovic’s life, which until today were not known to the Serbian public. He elaborated in great detail the so-called Sima Marković’s Moscows years (between 1935 to 1938), which in fact represent the beginning of his end. The author of this work put a significant accent on the clarification of the circumstances that led to Markovic’s arrest and execution. Particular attention is drawn to the methods of the depersonification of Sima Markovic from “number one” (which comrades in the Communist Party called him for his exceptional reputation), to “number 10” (the nickname that Stalin gave to Sima Marković with the desire to marginalize him). Unlike others who approached communism pragmatically. Sima Markovic’s motives were idealistic, and therefore Bondarev rightly argues that “the real Communist era ended with the arrest of Sima Markovic” (p. 56).

Ljubodrag Dimić in the work entitled “Sima Markovic, the Yugoslav Reality” well notes that Sima Markovic looked critically at the world around him, life, Marxism, and thus the Yugoslav reality and he did so with the eyes of an intellectual in a war-torn rural state. Yet, although Markovic was critical of the times in which he lived, his perception of reality was always “bounded on Marxist theoretical thought” (p. 58). In the Yugoslav reality of that period were sharp national conflicts, and Sima Markovic early recognized that the paradigm of the “three tribes of a nation”

rested on a “feet of clay”. He also believed that excessive government borrowing was not good because in this case the Kingdom of SHS became a “slave of the Entente.” Furthermore Markovic had a negative and critical attitude towards the state policy towards the village, because he believed that the state should fully abolish feudal conditions, concludes Dimic.

Sima Markovic was a gifted scholar, evidenced by the fact that he wrote papers in various fields - from economics to psychology. However, regardless of the wide horizons that his mind pursued, the dissident spirit of Sima Markovic chose the uncertain road of a political career. In lectures in the Department of the Belgrade University Sima replaced instead lectures on workers' meetings. Thus was created the work entitled “Tragedy of the Small Nations,” which was published in the St. Vitus 1919th year in the newspaper “Labour Gazette”. Dragan Simeunović has analyzed in detail this work of Sima Markovic which concludes in the following thesis: small nations in the era of imperialism are often thwarted in their struggle for national liberation. In fact, Simeunović well observes that local elites often do not favor these-called. small nations because “they trade with the people's freedom and nation” (p. 75), which inspired Sima Markovic to impose that famous “heresy,” that the national issue must be resolved - constitutionally. This perception was in direct opposition to Stalin's authority, and Simeunovic compares Markovic's courage and integrity with the courage of Svetozar Markovic, who opposed Bakunin at the time when he planned to raise the anarchist revolution.

In a willingness to boldly challenge (regardless of the consequences) everything that was not good in society, Sima Markovic demonstrated this particular penchant perhaps most explicitly by criticizing “notification “. Mira Radojevic has investigated all the ways in which (legal and illegal) Sima Markovic, as a senior party official fought the ban of the Communist Party. She believes that exactly on the rostrum on the 8th of April 1921 was held “one of the best and most important parliamentary debates on democratic rights, the legitimacy of government decisions and the clash of principles” (p. 103), in which the leading role was played by Sima Markovic.

In the anthology considerable space is devoted to the elaboration of the national question where in former Yugoslavia, the Communist Party split on as it seems the most vulnerable issue - the so-called left and right faction. Vitomir Vuletic has processed the most interesting theoretical attitudes of Sima Marković in relation to the national question, and points out that according to Markovic, there is a clear distinction between the people and the nation, where the people were in the

“ethnographic and historical category of nations” (p. 117). Vuletic in his work points out that in the former Yugoslavia three variants of the constitutional and legal structure were proposed: a centralist, federalist and autonomous structure. Sima Marković argued for the last organization, and that was classified as ideological heresy.

Oskar Kovac has examined the socio-economic relations in Serbia in the early 20th century, and public activity of Sima Markovic. Kovac devoted particular attention to the analysis of Markovic’s papers relating to the exchange problem after the collapse of the gold standard in the period between the two world wars. Furthermore Kovac considered as well the works of Sima Markovic, which are predominantly related to the industrial workers and the industrialization of the country, the agrarian overpopulation and agrarian reform. This text shows that Sima Marković gave a “comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic life in Serbia and Yugoslavia in the first third of the last century” (p. 127).

This work builds on the research of Zarko Jovanovic, who explained the views of Sima Markovic on the agrarian and peasant question, which was also frequently discussed in the Communist Party. In fact, this issue was one of the most important programs of the Communists not only in the First World War, but in the communist movement between the two world wars, because the peasantry was “the most numerous part of the population and an important factor of production and political power” (p. 139). Jovanovic points out that Sima Markovic was for the gradual integration of the peasant masses into the Party, without fear that they would “overwhelm the game.” Considerable attention in this anthology is rightly devoted to the philosophical thought of Sima Markovic, because even though he was a mathematician by education, his field of interest classifies him as a “creator of the Renaissance”, and he “swam” just well in the waters of economics, psychology and philosophy. Although Sima Markovic was a true erudite, his turning point to philosophy, according to the opinion of Ilija Marić occurred with his meeting with Lenin in Moscow in 1921 and his book “Materialism and Empire”. For Markovic philosophy was best represented in the guise of dialectical materialism, in which “the dialectic is understood as a movement” (p. 149). In fact, thanks to the influence of Engels the positivism and neopositivism of Moric Slik, Marić concludes that Markovic, understood dialectical materialism as “the philosophy of modern science” (p. 149).

In the scientific work that Marija Đorić wrote, she explores the ideological foundation of Sima Markovic’s works, which were often questioned. In fact, Sima Markovic belonged to the so-called right faction of the Communist Party, though

accused of being a “rightist“ (and even for monarchism), but the fact is that Sima Markovic on all other parameters was primarily a communist and a leftist who dared to think differently from the Comintern. The authoress analyzes everything that affected Sima Markovic from being accused of being a “rightist“, and with arguments that indicate that the left-wing ideology was more important to him than anything else because it was “a sense of his life” (p. 179).

Trivo Indić wrote an article entitled “Ljubomir Tadić on Sima Markovic,” which emphasizes that Tadic in his writings on the national question in Yugoslavia often referred to the view and scientific work of Sima Markovic. Tadic argued that Sima Markovic is “the most important Marxist theorist on national issues in the history of the Communist Party”, while his polemics with Stalin are also highly valued both in science and in the political sense of the word. The author indicates that Tadic’s interpretation of the disintegration of Yugoslavia rests on the theoretical considerations of Sima Markovic on the issue of the national question.

“Dialectical Materialism and Science in Sima Markovic’s Work” is the title of the article written by Ivana Damjanovic. The author pointed out that Sima Markovic is an intellectual in the true sense of the word, because he found a link between dialectical materialism and science. She indicates that Sima Markovic in most of his works claimed that “dialectical materialism is by no means a dogma, but a true philosophy of progress” (p. 193), and consequently cannot be opposed to scientific and technological progress.

This anthology greatly enriches the representation of Sava Marković’s PhD thesis called “General Ricatti’s Equations of the First Order,” which was prepared by Zarko Mijajlović. This is the second consecutive doctoral dissertation in the field of mathematics that was defended at the University of Belgrade in 1913. The author explains Markovic’s contribution to the theory of integrator (devices used for mechanical intergalation on ordinary differential equations). Zarko Mijajlović suggests that in the Virtual Library, at the Faculty of Mathematics there should be placed a collection of the digitized works of Sima Markovic. Sima Markovic belonged to the famous Belgrade mathematical school of international stature, founded by his mentor Mihailo Petrovic, Šćepan Ušćumlić and Miodrag Raškovic. Šćepan Ušćumlić and Miodrag Rašković also share some very interesting details of their personal relationship with Sima and his mentor - thus indicating that Mika Alas fatherly advised his best student to turn off from politics and devote himself to science, “Simo, Simo, leave politics, return to mathematics. In mathematics,

you'll be able to do something that will be of benefit to you and to mankind "(p. 221).

Miodrag Raskovic and Branislav Popovic wrote on the contribution of Sima Markovic's methodology of teaching mathematics. They believe that Sima Markovic had great scientific potential that unfortunately under the weight of political ambitions remained on the sidelines. In their scientific work they analyze Marković's scientific creativity based on his works that were published in scientific journals and presented at prestigious conferences. The scientific contribution of Sima Markovic in the field of mathematical science is undeniable, but little is known that he had very innovative ideas when it came to the methodology of teaching and the organization of the school system. Particularly significant in this anthology we consider the representation of textbooks for secondary schools, which were written by Sima Markovic personally. Sima Markovic realized the scope of Einstein's theory of relativity when even Tesla doubted its importance. Sima Markovic already in the middle of the third decade of the 20th century published in Serbian a scientific popular sketch of the theory of relativity, which Vukotoa Babovic discusses. The author believes that there are two reasons especially important when it comes to this publication. First, Markovic was the founder of the popularization of tradition in the study of physics in Serbia; second, he asserted that mathematical power worked on linking mathematics and physics. Pero Simic made a unique contribution to the elucidation of the character and work of Sima Markovic, with special emphasis on the role of Josip Broz Tito in the political overthrow of "the other no. 1". Pero Simic sees Tito and Markovic like the two antipodes which were connected by the communist utopia. However, the author's opinion is that they were more different than similar, "Markovic envisioned communism as an ideal harmony and magnificent synthesis of economics, politics, science, philosophy, ethics and aesthetics, and Broz sought the fast chance to succeed quickly no matter the consequences of the experiment, the better to hold power "(p. 242).

Archival material helped very much in uncovering some hidden parts of the life of Sima Markovic. The scientific work of Dragan Gačić played a major role on finding out some details of Sima Markovic's life that were based on the specific data from the Historical Archives of Belgrade discovering something more about the origin of Sima Markovic's parents, the places where he lived after moving to Belgrade in 1907, occupation and religious affiliation, etc.. The author devotes special attention to the analysis of the first court instance in Belgrade on 12 December in

1922 when Dr. Sima Markovic was found “guilty, accused of working against the state order” (p. 251).

Ljubodrag Popovic introduces new information from Sima Markovic’s biography, almost unknown to the public focusing on his scientific work, based on materials from the Archive of Serbia. Great emphasis is put on the data from Sima Markovic’s schooling in Kragujevac gymnasium, which reveal the details of his introduction to his future mentor and scientific authority, Mihailo Petrovic. In this work we can see that Markovic was a remarkable student who garnered the highest ratings and awards from various fields.

At the end of the anthology there are photos that represent the most important parts of Sima Markovic’s life, which completes this reading in an aesthetic as well as in the qualitative sense. This is important reading that paints the various segments of the life story of Sima Markovic where the significant role belonged to science and politics. And in traveling back in time the reader is able to relive the moments not just in passing of this undeniably important figure in science and the socialist movement, but as a parallel, to experience the socio-political climate in which it existed in the era of the Kingdom of SHS (later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). Sima Markovic was willing to die for his ideals. He was obviously a brave man and with great intellectual integrity, who “dared” even to debate with Stalin. Serbian Sciences has repaid him with this anthology which is the only witness to the real truth and the life of Sima Markovic. Apparently the age of “true communists” who really believed in the Marxist utopia is far from us. It disappeared in Stalin’s purges with Sima Markovic. If nothing else, this book is a debt of honor which Serbian (but also Yugoslavian) science returns to Sima Markovic.