

**DRAGAN SIMEUNOVIĆ, “THE SERBIAN STATEHOOD THOUGHT”,  
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The new book of dr Dragan Simeunović, titled “The Serbian statehood thought” represents a real treasure trove in the research of the Serbian political thought of the new century. This work, when speaking of the subject of the research, the methodology and its significance, might be considered as a logical sequel to “The New Age Political Ideas of Serbs”, which was published by this author in 2000. Dragan Simeunović is an erudite of our time, who not only fills the blanks of the Serbian politic studies by his hermeneutic methodological approach, but also enlightens significant, but already a little bit forgotten figures of the Serbian history that have, without a doubt, left a significant mark on the Serbian statehood thought.

This books has 458 pages, which envisage a mosaic of lives and works of the most significant people among the Serbs, who researched the topic of state politics from the period of the 17th century, up to the beginning of the Second World War. This scientific monograph of dr Dragan Simeunović can be regarded even as a work of the culture of remembrance, through which he pays his respects to all the giants of the Serbian statehood thought in the best way possible – by not letting them be forgotten.

By lining up the figures on a basis of chronological system of research, Simeunović dedicated his first pages to Đorđe Branković, who unjustly carried “the stamp of guilt”. At one moment, Simeunović even compares him to Machiavelli, since Branković, just like the Italian founder of real politics, wrote his book during his captivity. The difference lays in the fact, states Simeunović, that Nicollo Machiavelli wrote his book to serve to the ruler as a “guideline for ruling”, while Đorđe Branković wrote a book that was to serve as a guideline to Serbian people for ruling their own country, and for the writer himself, as “a strongpoint for winning the Serbian region”. But, what history has forgotten, and by all means, what we have forgotten, is that Branković was a nobleman that dared to present a request for forming Serbian New age state, even under the auspices of the Austrian Empire which cost him his freedom, concludes Simeunović.

Jovan Rajić was one of the best Serbian intellectuals, that with a good reason found his place in this remarkable monograph, and whose political thought was to a great extent impacted by his early emigrational experience. Rajić was a man that wrote a catechism in 17 days, by which, as Simeunović believes, he took a stand in the line of saviors of the “religion and beings of the Serbian nation”. His Eastern variant of enlightenment, combined with the Western form of rationalism, impacted in such way that in certain moments, the author compares him to Hobbes, due to his “organismic view of the state”. The greatness of Jovan Rajić lays in the fact that, as the author states, he realized that no progress in the society, and thus in politics, cannot be made without the science.

Karađorđe and Filip Višnjić can be regarded as the most significant offspring of the Freedom movement in the whirl-wind of the First Serbian Uprising, and thus Simeunović dedicates to them a significant place in his research. While Višnjić (whom Simeunović rightfully calls “Serbian Homer”) fought with songs, saving history from the oblivion, Karađorđe, as a short-tempered but righteous leader, fought with a gun on a battle field. The common denominator which links these two completely different characters from our history of our statehood thought is unequivocally – the freedom. Not just as general, national freedom, but also as an individual freedom.

In this collection of most different pearls, a special part of this book was dedicated to the prince Ivo of Semberija, who, as Simeunović points out, represents a grandiose and extraordinary example of generosity and nobleness, that, unfortunately, Serbian people did not cherish much. By saving Serbs from the Turks by purchasing slaves, which financially devastated him, prince Ivo is the real example of bravery and manhood of which was more often sung than it happened in the real life.

When writing about Dimitrije Davidović, Simeunović rightfully speaks of “the Serbian Metternich” since this is a man who “opened the doors of freedom” to the captured Serbs, and effected an edict in 1830, and maybe most importantly, created the Sretenje Constitution, which was so progressive for those times, that all great powers rejected without even thinking.

In this scientific monograph, among numerous giants and intellectuals who did great things to their own nation, the author also found a place for an illiterate, but “striking ruler” whose manner was to “rule by mockery”, in such way degrading his opponents. It is a unique personality of Miloš Obrenović, who succeeded by trickery to do what Karađorđe did not succeed with his courage and his guns. The

author also made place for one of Miloš's contemporaries, Vuk Karadžić, who was a proponent of the idea of the "enlightened ruler", which dragged him into a conflict with the absolutist-oriented prince Miloš. Apart from numerous merits Vuk Karadžić left to his people, Simeunović does not fail to mention the fact that he was the one who determined the beginning of the Serbian Social Revolution more precisely than any other of his contemporary colleagues.

The Serbian Statehood Thought was created in the hard times, so it was often driven by the idea of "manhood and bravery", which were most explicitly expressed with Njegoš. Simeunović elaborates the term of freedom used by Njegoš, while making a clear distinction between the freedom of an individual and the freedom of a nation. While the first was limited by "the patriarchal norms of manhood", the latter belongs to a kind of apeiron in an action sense.

From the period of the First Serbian Uprising, Simeunović introduces is to the period of parliamentary life, in which Jevrem Grujić, "the father of the civil parliamentary", whose contributions from the St. Andrew's Assembly were stolen by others, played a very significant role. Despite that, Grujić showed his great non-vain spirit when he stressed that "he does not want to be the first, but to be useful to his nation".

Stojan Novaković is depicted by the author as a man of science and politics, for whom science had to be a servant of the state, while national history should serve for developing consciousness about the unification of Serbs. While Novaković amalgamates science and politics, general Jovan Mišković, as the author notes, rules "the absolute patriotism". Jovan Mišković looked at the world "through the eyes of his nation", by creating a paradigm which is nowadays a little bit forgotten – "the honor of a nation".

Dragan Simeunović does not miss a chance to stress out the topicality of the ideas of characters which marked the "New Age". In this context, he dedicates a significant place to Vasa Pelagić, who noted that Serbian discord was the "stumbling stone", and not only "among the populace", but also among "the Serbian lords".

The book "The Serbian Statehood Thought" would not be complete if Simeunović did not enlist Apis and "The Black Hand" as significant factors which predisposed further development of the Serbian statehood. The author points out a very significant fact that "The Black Hand", with Apis as its leader, became "the eminence grise of the Serbian politics". Dragutin Dimitrijević Apis and his conspirator or-

ganization had an impact not only on the internal, but also the external Serbian politics, thus the author rightfully dedicates a significant place in the book to them.

Simeunović writes about Milovan Milovanović as of “the man who created the Balkan League”. The importance of the Balkan League lays in the fact that, thanks to it, Serbia gained significant territorial expansion. A treatise Milovanović wrote, entitled “Our foreign policies” has a crucial role in forming the opinion of those times. For Milovan Milovanović, success was all, but in foreign politics, he believed that the small has to lean “on the back of the large ones” in order to be taken seriously.

When writing about Jovan Skerlić as of a man who was before his times, the author observes his sense for polyromantic, that is “political predictions”, to which even the contemporary political science strives. Skerlić was, as Simeunović notes, a political idealist and he “gave the right” to pessimism only to an individual, but not to the entire nations. Some terms, such as “legalization of bribe”, which were criticized by Skerlić, have remained timeless.

“Princip of the Young Bosnia” is a part of the book which can be dualistically understood. On one hand, the author writes about Gavrilo Princip as of a young “Yugoslavian nationalist” which lived and died for an idea. On the other, Simeunović elaborates attitudes, that is, the principles of action of “The Young Bosnia” among which “the willingness to sacrifice” on the pedestal, which was not an exclusive feature of the members of the Young Bosnia, but was found among the other European national liberation movements of those times. No matter the heterogeneity of “The Young Bosnia”, Gavrilo Princip can rightfully be considered as its most significant “offspring” who at the same time represented an inseparable part not only the Balkan, but also European insurrected political culture.

While researching the life and work of Jovan Cvijić, Dragan Simeunović states that great scientists are most often apolitical. Thus, we can state that Cvijić had a normative-ontological approach to politics. He was, as the author believes, spiritually faithful to science, but regarding his actions, “pliable to politics”.

For Nikola Tesla, Simeunović rightfully believes that this is probably our only proven genius in whom can be found elements of patriotism, cosmopolitanism and universalism. Such great figure was also specific given the fact that, despite his universalism (he believed in the future without nations), he had strong national feelings (which Simeunović expresses in numerous examples from Tesla’s private life).

Among the persons who left the biggest mark on the Serbian statehood thought of the 20th century definitely is also Aleksandar I Karađorđević. The great circulation of the ideas of freedom, according to author's ideas, starts with Karađorđević in the 19th century, only to end with his descendant, Alexander the Unifier, who "spaced two empires apart" in order to make a room in this region for the first state of the Southern Slavs. Aleksandar Karađorđević switched the dream of uniting all Serbs for the dream of uniting all Southern Slavs, which eventually cost him his life.

The author has, seen in a Hegelian way, approached research of the Serbian statehood thought as an absolute spirit in a true sense of the word, since he strived toward the scientific truth which is always followed by objectivity. Because of that, his book equally has space for both the leftists and the rightists; for politicians and scientists; for monarchists and communists. The latter ones also had a significant role in forming the Serbian statehood thoughts, among which Simeunović singled out Sima Marković, the first Secretary of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, who was an intellectual of a kind and who carried the hard burden of politics, ending his life in one of the Stalin's purges. His only "political heresy" was that he had an intention to resolve the national issue as a constitutional, and not revolutionary one, which classified him as a so-called "right-wing" of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.

Last, but not least significant place in this remarkable study of the evolution of Serbian statehood thoughts went to prince Pavle, who unjustly carried "the stamp of guilt" only because he thought all the best of his nation, protecting it from the whirl-wind of war. But, as it often turns out to be, the truth eventually comes out, if not instantly, then after "the troubled times" are over, in which the line between the Manichaeic-like set principles of good and evil is blurred.

The book written by dr Dragan Simeunović leads us on a historical journey during which we encounter different, but equally significant individuals which shaped the Serbian statehood thought. The significance of this scientific monograph is not only that it enlightens numerous social political events, but also in the fact that this book represents a sort of an apology to all the ones who left a nondescript trail by his life and actions in the creation of Serbian spiritual being. Due to all this, this monograph entitled "Serbian statehood thought" can rightfully be seen as an extraordinary political study which becomes a part of the culture of remembrance of personalities and events which are an integral part of the Serbian national identity.