

## FOREWORD

National minorities have traditionally been historiography's poor step-children: in great histories of nation-states, they are mentioned seldom or only in passing (since they are not perceived as "state-building elements" and do not rank among the main actors), but also in grand historical narratives of certain peoples (since they live outside of the nation-state in comparatively smaller groups and usually have no influence on the main currents of national history). To be sure, there are exceptions – primarily when a large group of members of a people lives as a minority in another country (such as the Hungarians in Transylvania or the Albanians in former Yugoslavia and Greece), or when the minority question triggers a large international conflict (such as the ethnic Germans in the Sudetenland crisis). Although such treatment of national minorities is understandable, it is not acceptable, because no national history is complete without the history of minorities. This holds true, especially for the Balkans, which notoriously "produces more history than it can consume". Its tumultuous history has also produced a large number of national minorities, that previously used to be even more numerous. To an even higher degree, this holds for the territory of former Yugoslavia where history had first created and then reduced the number of minority communities and their members. Despite that, here too national minorities played a very much subordinated role in historiography. Even the question of the largest minority

---

group, the Albanians, was opened in the historiographies of the majority peoples only in the context of the Kosovo problem and not as an independent and valuable historiographical topic in itself. For these reasons, works on the history of national minorities can never be numerous enough.

Guided by such perception of minority issues in historiography, the Institute for Recent History of Serbia published last year the collection of papers *Između slobode i teskobe. Nacionalne manjine u Jugoslaviji*, edited by Božica Slavković Mirić, Milana Živanović, and Davor Stipić comprised a number of articles dealing with various minority topics. Since the field of research is vast, it was concluded that another edited volume on national minorities in a short time would not be amiss, more so since there have been several researchers dealing with minority topics for quite some time. Although originally conceived as both more voluminous and better rounded off, the present volume eventually turned out slimmer and more loosely structured because, overwhelmed by other tasks, some prospective authors renounced their cooperation at the beginning or during the work on the project. Nevertheless, although the collection might seem lacking inner cohesion, the editors deem the collected articles worth publishing.

All essays in this volume are connected by the common general topic – national minorities – but there is also a closer thematic connection among several of them. Two papers, by Borče Ilijevski and Enes S. Omerović deal with one of the most important questions for the minorities, the statistical one, exemplified by minority

---

censuses in Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina respectively. Among other things, the authors point at the basic problem of statistics, i.e. at pitfalls hidden behind apparently clear-cut numbers. The experienced researcher of international relations, Árpád Hornyák, dealt with the minority problem in Yugoslav-Hungarian bilateral relations during the interwar period, unveiling the diplomatic usability of the matter. Nikola Minov dealt with the national minority that in Yugoslavia never became one – the Aromunes – during the first four turbulent decades of the 20th century. In her Braudelian style, Božica Slavković Mirić crossed over into the history of everyday life and ethnology on the example of the Kosovo Albanians, pointing at internal obstacles to the modernization of that national minority, but also at cultural traits it shared with the neighboring peoples. On the other hand, another article dealing with the same minority, by Boris Mosković, is a classical piece of political history and focuses on one of the most sensitive moments in Yugoslavia's post-war history – the Albanian demonstrations in the spring of 1981 that ushered into the crisis that set in motion the avalanche that would eventually lead to the break-up of the country. Finally, the volume contains three biographically tinged contributions. Melina Rokai's article deals with the less known, but by no means unimportant Paulina Lebl-Albala as an early example of multi-layered identity such as gains importance in our own days. Papers by Aleksandar V. Miletić and Zoran Janjetović elucidate the attitude of two political heavyweights of the post-war Yugoslavia, Milovan Djilas and Aleksandar Ranković, towards national minorities, open-

---

ing thus, the question of the influence of prominent actors on national and minority policies.

Finally, following the main idea and realizing one of the main goals set forth in the edited volume *Između slobode i teskobe. Nacionalne manjine u Jugoslaviji*, i.e. to encourage further research of unjustifiably neglected minority topics, we present the collection of articles LOST IN THE KALEIDOSCOPE: NATIONAL MINORITIES IN YUGOSLAVIA to the public, painfully aware that the volume may be too “variegated” and in a way incomplete for some tastes. However, historiography is a work in progress – especially when one deals with under-researched fields. We continue to hope that the papers we publish here will spur further research of minority topics, that some of the papers will possibly serve as the starting points for such research, and that the present volume will not be the last in the series of collections dealing with minority subjects.

Belgrade/Sarajevo, November 2024