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ON THE PROBLEM OF DEMOCRACY AND PARLIAMENTARIANISM IN YUGOSLAVIA BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

ABSTRACT: *The questions of democracy and parliamentarianism are the ones of the least researched topics from the realm of interwar Yugoslavia, remaining out of historiographical insight starting only from the standpoint of already existing knowledge. This article tries to bring the focus of attention to the relevant social categories whose interaction, according to many contemporaries, historians and political scientists, was hiding the key for solving Yugoslav problems. Their opinion was, and still is, that consistent obeying to the democratic principles would amortize inherited differences, leading to the gradual construction of the solidary, united country.*

KEY WORDS: *Kingdom of Yugoslavia, democracy, parliamentarianism, political and social elites*

At the beginning of the 20th century and during the First World War (1914 - 1918), the wishes and ideas of those who had supported the unification of the Yugoslav peoples were that the future country of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians should be formed at the level of contemporary European democratic and political standards. It was an opinion of many supporters of the Yugoslav idea that the question of democracy within the country was one of the most important, if not the key issue. This was due to the fact that establishment, adherence and consistent reinforcement of the basic principles of democracy - freedom, the rule of the people and equality - could in itself neutralize the existing differences between the peoples who were for the first time in history gathered within the borders of a single country. The issue of democracy was especially important to a group of Serb, or rather Ser-

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bian, intellectual elite. The foundation for this conviction was the democratic and parliamentary experiences gained after the year 1903 (after major changes concerning dynastic and democratic regimes in the Kingdom of Serbia), and also a decent understanding of the European experiences in establishing democratic systems as the most natural, and most appropriate form of social order for a human society. Contact with Europe during the First World War and visits to the great European centers of democracy - Paris, London and Geneva - offering an expansion of views in many different ways, gave more power to such thinking. On the other side, among the Croats and Slovenes living within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the image of a democratic alignment with the Kingdom of Serbia 1903 - 1914, seemed appealing, encouraging and promising, although being far away from the complete achievement of democratic ideals.¹

However, the very first days, and then the following years of life together brought disappointment. After 22 years of existence - taking the year of 1941 as the year of the denouement, it is noticeable looking at this country that it had not lived up to any of the given expectations, even with the democracy issue and hopes placed upon it. It is not an infrequent opinion that it is the non-democratic regimes in the Kingdom (SCS) of Yugoslavia that had decreased the strength and importance of the Yugoslav idea and produced doubt in the historical justification for its creation. With this in mind, mention can be made of one historical paradox: the idea of a Yugoslav coun-

¹ See J. Скерлић, *Есеји о српско-хрватском питању*, Загреб 1918; Б. Марковић, *Наше народно уједињење*, Женева 1918; Н. Нинковић, *Iz velikog doba. Moj rad i moji doživljaji za vrijeme svjetskog rata*, Zagreb 1927; В. Вошњак, *U borbi za ujedinjenu narodnu državu*, Ljubljana - Beograd - Zagreb 1928; Ј. М. Јовановић, *Стварање заједничке државе Срба, Хрвата и Словенаца*, I-III, Београд 1928-1930; Н. Стојановић, *Србија и југословенско уједињење*, Београд 1939; Д. Јанковић, *Jugoslovensko pitanje i Krfska deklaracija 1917. godine*, Beograd 1967; Ј. Плетиерски, *Prva odločitev Slovencev za Jugoslavijo*, Ljubljana 1971; М. Зећевић, *Slovenska ljudska stranka i jugoslovensko ujedinjenje 1917-1921*, Beograd 1973; Д. Јанковић, *Србија и југословенско питање 1914-1915. године*, Београд 1973; А. Митровић, *Србија у Првом светском рату*, Београд 1984; Ј. Трговчевић, *Научници Србије и стварање југословенске државе 1914-1920*, Београд 1986; М. Екмечић, *Стварање Југославије 1790-1918*, 2, Београд 1989; В. Крзман, *Hrvatska u Prvom svjetskom ratu. Hrvatsko-srpski politički odnosi*, Zagreb 1989; М. Радојевић, „Демократска странка и југословенска идеја“, *Историја 20. века*, 2/1995, 7-24; М. Радојевић, „Милан Грол у борби за југословенску идеју“, *ЛИЧ*, 1-2/1999, 70-88; М. Радојевић, „Југословенство у преписци српских интелектуалаца 1914-1918“, *Писмо*, зборник радова, Београд 2001, 223-235; М. Радојевић, *Научник и политика. Политичка биографија Божидара В. Марковића (1874-1946)*, Београд 2007; М. Рadojević, „Stereotipi o jugoslovenstvu“, *Myths and stereotypes of the nationalism and communism in ex Yugoslavia*, Novi Sad 2008, 43-52; М. Радоевич, „Югославянская государственная и национальная идея в период Первой мировой войны“, *Народы Габсбургской монархии в 1914-1920гг.: от национальных движений к созданию национальных государств*, том I, Москва 2012, 397-404.

try had been defended with force against everyone believed to be harming it, using methods which actually decreased the strength of this very idea. The Kingdom had been developing under the burden of these three groups of problems: 1) imperfection, and later on, the abolishment of the democratic and parliamentary order 2) conflict among the constituent nations, especially the Serbs and the Croats, accompanied by decades of discussions about the character of the governmental order and 3) the weight of social and economic issues. Originally the contemporaries of that time, and then later, historians and political scientists have all disputed the "precedence" of these problems. According to many, the unresolved national issues were the most difficult, and therefore, the most decisive. Others were of the opinion that consistent reinforcement of democratic principles would have indeed - as was believed prior to unification - decreased the inherent differences, doubts and hatred, until, by way of the gradual acceptance of co-existence, together with the tolerance of uniqueness, a unified country would have been achieved, united both in the consciousness of people and its constitutional-legal foundation. According to these explanations, the issue of democracy was all encompassing and without its resolution there could be no mention of solving the other issues. The thesis of the all powerful influences of economic factors also has its supporters. To counter such theories, it is possible to discuss the tightly connected nature of these issues, how they mutually affected one another, and how they were inextricably intertwined.²

This difference in views is another example of the wide range of opinions about the most controversial issues in the history of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (SCS). Even more than half a century after its passing, this country is in many ways an unsolved puzzle, a riddle that is difficult to pass off to historiography, especially in those instances when for the imposed questions simple answers are being sought and found. One such question is the issue of democracy and parliamentarianism, which from the standpoint of today's understanding cannot be competently answered. To this day, there are no studies available that would serve to enlighten its most im-

² See M. Грол, „Повезаност проблема“, *Одјек*, 17. IX 1936; М. Грол, *Данашњи разговори о реформама*, Крагујевац 1940; Ж. Балугџић, „Основе досадашњих несугласица Срба и Хрвата“, *Српски књижевни гласник (СКГ)*, LIX, бр. 8, 16. IV 1940, 609–612; S. Pribičević, *Diktatura kralja Aleksandra*, Beograd 1953; T. Stojkov, *Opozicija u vreme šestojanuarske diktature 1929–1953*, Beograd 1969; М. Грол, *Искушења демократије*, Beograd 1991; B. Petranović, M. Zečević, *Agonija dve Jugoslavije*, Beograd 1991; М. Радојевић, *Удружена опозиција 1935–1939*, Beograd 1994, 152–158; B. Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918–1988*, I, Beograd 1988, M. Radojević, „Milan Grol o problemima demokratije i parlamentarizma u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji“, *Vojnoistorijski glasnik*, 3/1996, 449–62; I. Dobrivojević, *Državna represija u doba diktature kralja Aleksandra 1929–1935*, Beograd 2006.

portant aspects at the least. The existing monographs about the political parties do not represent a satisfactory source for historical and historiographic curiosity about the democratic issue. These monographs have been written on the Democratic, Radical, Slovenian People's, Croatian Peasants' Party and the Yugoslav Moslem Organization, on Parliament until its abolishment in 1929 and also the opposition Serbian parties after the proclamation of the personal reign (monarchical-dictatorship) of King Alexander.³ It is not likely that a concrete answer can be found without conducting interdisciplinary research, whose results should reflect almost the entire history of the Kingdom. Many aspects are difficult or impossible to comprehend without a familiarity with Yugoslav society of that time; its intellectuals, middle-class, peasantry, public servants, military, history of its national movements, institutions and establishments, mentality, climate, religious influences, culture, economy and political awareness. During conducting research on these topics, it is sometimes necessary to look deeply into the 19th century, at the formation of the national states, the creation of national programs, the creation of the first modern political parties, constitutional disputes, the first steps towards parliamentarianism and contact with European democratic political theories.⁴

The crisis of democracy and parliamentarianism in the Kingdom of SCS had already been a topic even during the early 1920's. During these discussions, the question of whether it is possible to talk about the crisis of an entity that does not even exist has been raised. This was actually a question of whether it was a crisis of democracy or of its weak and insufficient establishment that was the problem. In the circles of adherents of democracy, such opinions were formed, but also an entirely opposite way of thinking had emerged, which stated that the crisis of democracy was not in question. Rather, it was the regime that had abused parliamentary practices that should be blamed for the endangerment of democracy. According to these interpretations, the people of the Kingdom, irrespective of whether it was considered to be "of three names" or multi-national, with its history, battles for nation-

³ B. Gligorijević, *Demokratska stranka i politički odnosi u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca*, Beograd 1970; Lj. Boban, *Maček i politika Hrvatske seljačke stranke 1929–1941*, I–II, Zagreb 1974; A. Purivatra, *Jugoslovenska muslimanska organizacija u političkom životu Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenavca*, Sarajevo 1974; B. Gligorijević, *Parlament i političke stranke u Jugoslaviji (1919–1929)*, Beograd 1979; M. Zečević, *Na istorijskoj prekretnici. Slovenci u politici jugoslovenske države 1919–1929*, Beograd 1985; М. Радојевић, *Удружена опозиција 1935–1939*, Београд 1994; Г. С. Кривокапић-Јовић, *Оклоп без витеза. О социјалним основама и организационој структури Народне радикалне странке у Краљевини Срба, Хрвата и Словенаца (1918–1929)*, Београд 2002.

⁴ М. Грол, *Искушења демократије*, Београд 1991; А. А. Миљковић, *У служби истине и демократије*, Београд 1991.

al rights and freedom, tradition and mentality was considered to be predetermined for democracy and its postulates.⁵ Such an idealistic belief was, however, not very likely to withstand scientific analysis without losing its credibility. The crisis of democracy was very obvious in the developed countries of the West as well, even within those that Bartelemy, a Parisian law professor, called the “mature democracies”.⁶ In France, for example, the parliamentary system had started turning into its own opposite, creating – according to Professor Branko Petranović, a Yugoslav historian – “the illusion of an atmosphere of open discussions in the shadow of changes of governments and the immobility of economic and parliamentary institutions”.⁷ Apart from that, democracy in Europe and the world had become wedged between two totalitarian ideologies: communist-bolshevism and fascism. Breakdowns caused by the First World War and its aftermath gave rise to uncertainty, the need to question old values that had already been tried and tested, even though sometimes, these values proved unsatisfactory. On the other hand, circumstances there instigated a search for new ways and the examination of different kinds of ideas. The crisis of democracy within the Kingdom of SCS thus coincided with similar occurrences in the world; however, it was characterized by many of its own unique and difficult problems.

There had been a number of obstacles to the development of democracy. Some of these were the uneducated population, the inability of the people to use the system and participate in the exchange of opinions, the imbalanced spiritual and material growth, and historical circumstances. According to Milan Grol, a Serbian politician-intellectual and an ideologue of the Democratic Party, the difficult trials of democracy in the Balkans and within the countries of the Danube river basin were reflected in the disastrously interwoven nature of these two processes: the liberation from the „spiritual burdens of the past” – which was incomplete – and protection from „the increasing material difficulties of today” – a process that was yet

⁵ М. Грол, *Две године заблуда и лутања*, Београд 1921; Љ. Стојановић, „Уставна или парламентарна монархија и демократија“, *СКГ*, III, бр. 8, 16. VIII 1921, 621–624; М. Грол, „Криза Демократске странке“, *СКГ*, VII, бр. 5, 1. XI 1922, 377–380; Ј. М. Продановић, „Југословенска Републичанска Странка“, *Нова Европа*, VII, бр. 10, 1. IV 1923, 288–290; Ј. Продановић, „Радикална странка“, *Нова Европа*, XIII, бр. 12, 22. VI 1926, 386–394; Б. Марковић, „Данашња политичка криза“, *СКГ*, XXV, бр. 8, 16. XII 1928, 614–625; М. Грол, „Наши унутрашњи задаци“, *Живот и рад*, I, св. 2, Београд 1928, 81–83; М. Рadojević, „Политичка опозиција у Краљевини (SHS) Југославији“, *Istorija 20. veka*, 2/1997, 19–35.

⁶ Д. Јовановић, „Чехословачка – тврђава демократије“, *Преглед*, XIV, св. 175–176, Сарајево 1938, 390.

⁷ В. Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918–1988*, I, 173. See: А. Митровић, *Време нетрпељивих. Политичка историја великих држава Европе 1919–1939*, Подгорица 2004, 146–157.

to commence. Causes and effects of many occurrences in this region were due to the intersection of national-religious problems with the socio-economic issues.⁸

The Kingdom of SCS represents an example of an existence burdened with problems. The Kingdom was conceived burdened with centuries' old historical, religious and national divisions and widely differentiating levels of economic and cultural development among its component regions, which had not been integrated, even up until the beginning of the Second World War. In time, these differences did not decrease; in fact, they grew even larger still, especially concerning is national and political issues.⁹ In the country, democracy represented a phenomenon of recent history. Democratic tradition and parliamentarianism in the Kingdom of Serbia, which in 1918 melted away into the Yugoslav state, were being overly emphasized in the period after the War. This area was actually only acquainted with the real parliamentary practices for roughly 10 years.¹⁰ The majority of the population was politically illiterate; the people of the Kingdom can generally be considered politically immature, characterized by the lack of understanding of basic democratic behaviors. This lack could not be mitigated by the given theory of this people's natural and historical predestination for democracy. Where the political education of the people was concerned, overall education, normative acts and consistent reinforcement of the parliamentary policies in practice could have made some progress. However, what was not available throughout the preceding decades and even centuries was the collective aspiration towards democratic principles and a gradual progress throughout history, such as that which is found with the people of Switzerland, England and France. Democracy was never seen as a common goal for all the national and regional parts of the Kingdom. For 20 years, national demands, especially those from the Croats and the confessional differences were of greater interest than democracy. At one political assembly, Ljuba Davidovic, the leading member of the Serbian democratic opposition in the 30's, had admitted that the religious and national feelings reach „deeper into the soul than democratic principles”. He expressed his hopes that „the time will come when even our people will understand that we should abide

⁸ М. Грол, *Искушења демократије*, 12–17, 19.

⁹ See М. Грол, *Кроз две деценије Југославије*, б. „Политика и друштво“, св. 64, Београд, с.а; В. Petranović, *Istoriја Jugoslavije 1918–1988*, I, 56–85.

¹⁰ Ж. Живановић, *Политичка историја Србије у другој половини деветнаестог века*, IV, Београд 1925; М. Поповић, *Борбе за парламентарни режим у Србији*, Београд 1939; Ж. Митровић, *Српске политичке странке*, Београд 1939; М. Грол, *Из предратне Србије. Утисци и сећања о времену и људима*, Београд 1939, 12–14; О. Поповић-Обрадовић, *Парламентаризам у Србији од 1903. до 1914. године*, Београд 1998; Д. Стојановић, *Србија и демократија 1903–1914*, Београд 2003.

by the principles of democracy”.¹¹ History has shown, in hindsight, that he was wrong.

Research shows that Serbian democratic opposition followed these feelings partly because it had no national program of its own after the First World War. Up until 1939, and the creation of the Croatian Banovina (national-political and territorial-administrative entity of the Croats, within whose borders there lived almost one million Serbs) the Serbian national question had not been raised. Professor Slobodan Jovanovic, a renowned Serbian humanitarian and political authority, named this a state of Serbian „national demobilization”.¹² Among the Serbs, opinion that the Serbian national question had been resolved by the unification was commonly accepted. A fear of reopening the question had risen with good reason, keeping in mind that by doing so would create a series of other problems concerning minorities, borders and similar issues. Serbian democratic powers placed all of their hopes upon the democratic order, especially during the 1930's, supporting the idea of a civil, as opposed to a national state. It was considered that the guarantee that each individual is provided for by the system of a completely developed parliamentary democracy also guarantees each nationality its identity. Having gotten a full understanding of democratic political systems by 1914, the Serbian parties believed that a civic state, and not a national or religious state, represents a higher level of social organization. Thus, they believed that the resolution of accumulated problems within the Kingdom, together with the Croatian national question, could not come about without achieving democratic preconditions. According to the convictions of Milan Grol, democracy appeared to be „a healthy precondition for everything”.¹³

For a number of years, a dispute between the Serbian and Croatian oppositions had been taking place. The dispute concerned the order in which the most important problems should be resolved. Realignment of the state, or in other words, resolving the Croatian issue by guaranteeing national and territorial demands of the Croats, was, in Zagreb, perceived as the first priority. The process of democratization was the counter-position and was considered to be most important by the Serbian opposition. The Croatian political representatives believed that the reason for Belgrade's position was to postpone the Croatian issue for some other, possibly distant future. This ac-

¹¹ *Политика*, 30. IV 1935; M. Radojević, „Politička opozicija u Kraljevini (SHS) Jugoslaviji“, 29.

¹² С. Јовановић, „Југословенска мисао у прошлости и будућности“, *СКГ*, LIX, бр. 1, 1. I 1940, 29–38.

¹³ *Политика*, 3. II 1936; *Време*, 10. II 1936; *Политика*, 19. IV 1936; *Одјек*, 17. IX 1936; М. Грол, *Данашњи разговори о реформама*, Крагујевац 1940; М. Грол, *Искушења демократије*, 5–31, 50–59; М. Radojević, „Milan Grol o problemima demokratije i parlamentarizma u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji“, 55–58.

cusation was questionable considering the fact that the Serbian opposition, apart for the genuine demands for democracy as an unconditional and primary solution, had no other common solution for the problems within the Kingdom. This was especially true where the issue of the social realignment model in which the Croats were interested in was concerned.¹⁴ The political life of Serbia was being led by a tired, exhausted generation, which year after year showed great erosion in strength, ability, authority and ideas, while demonstrating immaturity and incompetence for dealing with these acute problems. Political manipulations, fascination with political power, and personal and inter-party intolerance had blurred and suffocated the individual instances of the democratic apostle-like deeds of some of the political pioneers.¹⁵ The responsibility of reinforcing democracy was, for the most part, placed onto the Serbian parties. However, during the first ten years of the Kingdom, these exact parties had helped destroy democratic prestige of the Kingdom of Serbia and passed up the chance to turn the newly created state into the long dreamed of „democratic paradise” during the First World War. When Milan Grol compared the quality of Serbian political life, parties and politicians before and after the First World War, he concluded that the results of such analysis show the entire „tragedy of our public life”. This democratic thinker, however, blamed the Croatian leaders for being blinded by the dreams of independent Croats in a free Croatian country. He also blames them for the complete absence of awareness of the importance of democratic order, claiming that „they gave nothing for the democratic regime”. Milan Grol considered the Croatian devotion to a „peasant democracy” to be unrealistic and wrong, since those two words, if „peasantry” is taken as the discriminating factor, „cannot go together”. Every dictatorship is opposed to democracy, even if the dictatorship is of a single social class. Since the peasantry consists of a socially non-homogeneous mass, it does not even constitute a class. The ideology that Croats strongly stood for, he called „Croatian National-Agrarianism”.¹⁶

Milan Grol was not the only politician and intellectual who studied the theoretical democratic thinking. The analysis of the period, for example, points to the fact that politically engaged people were involved with this matter. In addition, tens of others, sociologists and lawyers who did not belong to any political parties, published articles, and occasionally brochures and textbooks. These publications display an understanding of the problems

¹⁴ See M. Радојевић, *Удружена опозиција 1935–1939*, 152–158.

¹⁵ В. Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918–1988*, I, 132–175; Б. Петрановић, *Југословенско искуство српске националне интеграције*, Београд 1993, 26–27.

¹⁶ М. Грол, *Искушења демократије*, 50–59, 134; М. Грол, *Данашњи разговори о реформама*, 5–6, 14, 18; М. Grol, *Londonski dnevnik 1941–1944*, Beograd 1990, 459, 647.

of the Kingdom, but also the problems of Europe and the world. An understanding of foreign theoretical literature is also noticeable in these publications. Opinions expressed here varied greatly, and often were in direct opposition to one another. However, they all showed a common inclination to improve democracy within the country, using, among other ideas, foreign models of democratic- parliamentary systems. How many of these multiple theories could actually be applied for solving the problems within the Yugoslav borders represented a very specific problem, a problem of great importance. Although it is impossible to speak of Serbian political thought as a unified system of thinking, it is possible to say that it was characterized by frequent attempts to reconcile two political aspects. On one side was the experience of the democratic countries of the West, and on the other side was the frequent idealization of the „natural”, still „raw”, „not based on enlightened thought” democracy, which had brought Serbia in and out of the wars for independence from 1912 - 1918. Similarly to other undeveloped countries, the theory of democracy in the Kingdom was clashed with the political practices, and given the existing circumstances, it was objectively very difficult, if not impossible, to apply the theory to the given region.¹⁷

Historiographical research to date has raised many questions concerning the political competency, or to be more precise, the political skills and capabilities of the intellectuals of Serbia, and furthermore, the scope of their influence on the political processes. Any generalization in this direction would be risky and imprecise, however it is possible to note some general features. One such characteristic is that a vast amount of intellectual energy did not have a proper realization in the political practices. The intellectuals demonstrated a great ideological ability, but they were not well adjusted to the applied every day politics. Without an organized party the influence of the intellectuals remained extremely limited. There are many instances where their initiative, congresses, memos addressed to the King, projects for the social re-alignment and socio-political renaissance reflect the intellectuals’ good will and an understanding of the European and worldly political theory. On the other side, they also show the very insignificant influence the intellectuals had on the events in the country and the possibility for qualitative changes. Without support from a strong political party or a certain other kind of a political will, even the best ideas were condemned to failure and were unable to reach a wider range of people. On the other hand, there existed an occasional suspicion of the political parties towards the initiatives of the intellectuals’. Although this suspicion was more prominent with the Croatian parties, it was present with the Serbian parties as well. This suspicion was ac-

¹⁷ See М. Илић, *Политички чланци*, Београд 1946; А. А. Миљковић, *У служби истине и демократије*, Београд 1991; С. Протић, *Срби и демократија*, Ниш 1998.

accompanied by denying the right of the intellectuals to engage in resolving the political, state-legal and international crises outside of the structure of political parties. The Yugoslav state in between two World Wars suffered many defeats. One of these is reflected in that the state did not have the ability to utilize its intellectual potential, which was not insignificant. The intellectual elite were unsuccessful in imposing itself upon its environment and change it for the better. It will be up to future research to show to what degree the responsibility lay with the intellectual elite; how great its weaknesses were and how poorly it was adjusted to reality.¹⁸

Politically immature people are reflected in their political parties, whose poor quality is one of the factors for the crisis of parliamentarianism, and furthermore, the crisis of democracy. Other factors include, in the first place, the incomplete application of the principle that people should participate in governance of the country. Also, the Parliament was burdened with many major but also minor affairs due to the lack of local self-governing bodies, and the degree of difficulty of the national, religious and regional conflicts it dealt with. In addition, the Parliament was exhausted by discussions concerning the constitution, i.e. state-legal order. Another factor was the crucial role King Alexander played. Nevertheless, the first ten years of the Yugoslav state – up until Parliament was abolished – were marked by an imperfect parliamentary system that had granted this period the name of the period of the „rump” or limited parliamentarianism. Even so, this period represents the only common democratic experience of all Yugoslav peoples up to this date. Moreover, it is the opinion of prof. Branko Petranovic that the parliamentary government in the period from 1921 to 1929, „irrespective of all of its flaws, pseudo-forms, limited achievements”, was the „greatest value” of Yugoslavia between the two World Wars.¹⁹ The effects of the monarchic-dictatorship and especially of the „false” or pseudo-parliamentarianism beginning with the year of 1931 were catastrophic for democratic and parliamentary development. The people were denied the right to express their thoughts, found associations and make decisions. The old Serbian parties were broken down, and even though they had shown many weaknesses, they were the bearers of the democratic thinking. Generations that followed were neither raised in a regular parliamentary order nor did they know what a „normal political life” was.²⁰ The creation of the Croatian Banovina, together with the reorganization of the state on a national basis (which was done

¹⁸ M. Janićijević, *Stvaralačka inteligencija međuratne Jugoslavije*, Beograd 1984; M. Радојевић, *Научник и политика. Политичка биографија Божидара В. Марковића (1874–1946)*, 335–345, 353–355, 360–361.

¹⁹ Б. Петрановић, *Југословенско искуство српске националне интеграције*, 16.

²⁰ M. Grol, *Londonski dnevnik 1941–1945*, 517–518.

using non-democratic procedures; this was also the case with previous crucial acts) resolved a major portion of the Croatian national and political tendencies. The expectations that they would now support the establishment of the democratic order remained unfulfilled.²¹ The first Yugoslav state ended its life in multiple crises and disappointments. One of the most difficult (if not the most crucial one) disappointments referred to the unfulfilled hopes for the development of democracy in the country. The first common state of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, much like its heirs, had many experiences, but never lived up to the wishes of those who whole heartedly wanted it and imagined it to be – a genuine democratic community of citizens and peoples enjoying equality.

Mira RADOJEVIC

ON THE PROBLEM OF DEMOCRACY AND
PARLIAMENTARIANISM IN YUGOSLAVIA
BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

Summary

Even after more than few decades from its cessation, Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (SCS)/Yugoslavia remains as a kind of unknown term, hardly turning itself in to the historiography. Ones of the still completely unexplored topics are the questions of democracy and the parliamentarianism, which can not be fully judged only from the standpoints of contemporary knowledge. The real answers are unattainable without the understanding of Yugoslav society of the mentioned era, its elites, city population, peasantry, military, history of the national movements and institutions, mentality, religious influences, culture, economy, political ideas and foreign cultural and political influence. It is a very complex problem whose existence, according to many contemporaries, historians, and political scientists, was essential for solving the other problems of the Yugoslav state. Proponents of this attitude believed that consistent sticking to the democratic principles would had amortize the inherited differences, doubts and hatreds of the Yugoslav nations, until the gradual coexistence with tolerance of specialties would have enabled the creation of the solidary, united state. According to these theories, one of the hardest disappointments in the common state of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians emerged directly from giving up the hope in development of its democratization.

²¹ *Демократи о данашњем стању у земљи*, Београд 1939.

The crisis of the democracy and parliamentarianism in the Kingdom analogized with the similar phenomenon in Europe and the rest of world, but also had some special characteristics. Among them, unsolved national question was the one of the crucial ones, providing the absence of the vision of democracy as the common goal of all the national and territorial parts of the country.