

Ana Antic

Department of History

University of Exeter

*Living in the age of Axis internationalism: Imagining Europe in
Serbia before and during the Second World War*

Abstract

This article explores how 'European civilization' was imagined on the margins of Europe in the first half of the twentieth century, and how Balkan intellectuals saw their own societies' place in it in the context of interwar crises and WWII occupation. It traces the interwar development and wartime transformation of the intellectual debates regarding the modernization of Serbia/Yugoslavia, the role of the Balkans in the broader European culture, and the most appropriate path to becoming a member of the 'European family of nations.' In the first half of the article, I focus on the inter-war Serbian intelligentsia, and their discussions of various forms of international cultural, political and civilizational links and settings. These discussions centrally addressed the issue of Yugoslavia's (and Serbia's) 'Europeanness' and cultural identity in the context of the East-West symbolic and the state's complex cultural-historical legacies. Such debates demonstrated how frustrating the goal of Westernization and Europeanization turned out to be for Serbian intellectuals. After exploring the conundrums and seemingly insoluble contradictions of interwar modernization/Europeanization discussions, the article then goes on to analyze the dramatic changes in such intellectual outlooks after 1941, asking how Europe and European cultural/political integration were imagined in occupied Serbia, and whether the realities of the occupation could accommodate these earlier debates. Serbia can provide an excellent case study for exploring how the brutal Nazi occupation policies affected collaborationist governments, and how the latter tried to make sense of their troubled inclusion in the racial ideology of the New European Order under the German leadership. Was Germany's propaganda regarding European camaraderie taken seriously by any of the local actors? What did the Third Reich's dubious internationalism mean in the east and south-east of Europe, and did it have anything to offer to the intelligentsia as well as the population at large?

Key words: Europeanisation, Nazi occupation, collaboration, Balkans, Yugoslavia, Serbia, New European Order, fascist internationalism, modernisation

Following the establishment of new national states in Central and Eastern Europe after 1918, the Balkan region faced a turbulent political period. A string of modernizing and nationalizing governments proclaimed their intentions to 'Europeanize' the young states, and to advance them towards Western political, social and cultural standards.¹ The region's inclusion in the renovated system of international political institutions and cooperation served a similar aim, and a bumpy path towards modernization was embarked on, often under West European tutelage. However, democratic parliamentary experiments came to an unfortunate close throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the Yugoslav case perhaps being the most dramatic example of the failure of this emulation. In Yugoslavia too, stunted and forced nation-building efforts seemed to complement a number of other modernizing reforms in the areas of education, medicine, psychiatry, art, and various intellectual circles thrived, and participated avidly in European and international cultural and scientific developments.² On the other hand, the crisis and gradual failure of the international liberal order adversely affected such projects, and local discussions regarding the viability (or even desirability) of Westernizing the Balkans grew increasingly pessimistic. The task was certainly daunting, and especially so under the exceptionally inauspicious circumstances in interwar Europe.³ Throughout the 1930s, Yugoslavia faced a deepening political, economic and national crisis which ended in a military catastrophe when the country was wiped from the political map by the Axis occupation. Still, as a part of the German occupation system, Serbian intellectuals continued with their prewar modernization debates, and attempted to resolve the old problems within the new framework of Nazi Europe. In this article, I follow this historical background and roots of this allegiance to the New European Order under German leadership, and trace its intellectual implications. As the face of Europe changed radically between 1939 and 1945, Yugoslav and Serbian intellectuals and political thinkers searched for alternative definitions of the region's and their nations' role in the new international system, and these explorations often led them to unexpected conclusions and alliances.

On the other hand, the Third Reich's rhetoric of European unity and solidarity faced serious ideological obstacles from within National-Socialism itself when it was supposed to be applied as a propaganda tool in the East. Indeed, there were systematic efforts to present the Nazi conduct in the Second World War as a 'European crusade' intent on preserving and protecting European civilization. On the one side, one of the proclaimed goals was to usher into an 'epoch of the community of the free peoples of Europe', and create an atmosphere of 'comradeship' of all European nations, finally freed from the liberal-capitalist plutocratic system that abused and de-legitimized concepts such as self-determination and democracy. This discourse was supposed to accommodate both Western Europe and non-Germanic countries in the central, eastern and south-eastern regions of the continent. The notion of the Nazis' 'benevolent rule' and system of organic unity and solidarity portrayed the occupation regimes in Poland and Czechoslovakia, for instance, as working in the interest of the conquered nations, attempting to better their dreadful condition left after decades of liberal democratic reign. Also, Robert

Herzstein documents conscious attempts on the part of some Nazi ideologues and policy makers to be 'softer on the Untermenschen', to demonstrate to the local populations that they were not merely 'colonial property', and that they could be treated as organic parts of the 'European great region.' The central objective was to prevent alienation of subject peoples and, most notably, pro-Nazi soldiers coming from the Eastern territories.⁴

However, as Alexander Dallin argues in his study of the Nazi occupation in the conquered Soviet territories, the ideology of racial superiority and the Nazi vision of Slavs constantly interfered with any attempts to treat the local population as political or military allies in the fight against Bolshevism, even on a purely rhetorical level. According to Dallin, the military and political irrationality of such policy became particularly manifest when the conflict with the Soviet Union came to a stalemate and the German troops needed the occupied regions to be cooperative and pacified. Nevertheless, 'Hitler's programme provided for no positive cognizance of the millions who were to become Germany's new slaves.'⁵ The problem was that, although in the beginning even rather weak propagandistic attempts at what Dallin terms 'political warfare' were likely to enlist significant and perhaps critical popular support for the Nazis, 'giving consideration to the desires of the Easterners would have meant compromising Hitler's goals.'⁶ The Nazi *Ostpolitik* for a long time rejected any proposals for 'limited political partnership' as ideologically and politically heretical and deviant.⁷

Similar debates were occurring in Berlin with regard to political settlements to be applied to the defeated and occupied Serbia. Following the capitulation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in April 1941, the Axis powers dismembered the country, and Germany, Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary and Albania occupied significant chunks of the territory. In addition, a satellite state - the Independent State of Croatia - was created on the territories of today's Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Ultimately, unlike the Ukraine or Russia, rump Serbia, under the brutal German military occupation, saw the instalment in the summer of 1941 of a Quisling-like local regime. Among the Nazi leadership, Serbia and its population were conceived of in terms as disparaging and ideologically predetermined as was the case with the Soviet regions.⁸ The occupying authorities treated the population exceptionally brutally, while the government's demands, suggestions, complaints were regularly rebuffed and its authorizations increasingly limited, to the point of turning it into an administrative tool of the German command. And yet, the very existence of a seemingly autonomous governmental body with its own organs, propaganda channels and certain ideological precepts created a situation in which there emerged official and more or less articulately formulated local responses to various aspects of the Third Reich's ideology.

For these reasons, Serbia can provide an excellent case study for exploring how the brutal Nazi occupation policies affected collaborationist governments, and how the latter tried to make sense of their troubled inclusion in the racial ideology of the New European Order under the German leadership. Was Germany's propaganda regarding European camaraderie taken seriously by any of the local actors?

What did the Third Reich's dubious internationalism mean in the east and south-east of Europe, and did it have anything to offer to the intelligentsia as well as the population at large in the occupied territories? In the recent years, the phenomenon of Axis internationalism began to receive some historiographical attention, and several studies have dealt with Nazi Germany's attempts to develop the image of a collaborative and inclusive 'New Europe'. These attempts included efforts to set up transnational networks and organizations to replace the liberal ones, as well as building up a discourse of European solidarity and unity, which aimed to dispel the notion that the Nazi New Order meant German dominance but portrayed it as a proper (and truly international) alternative to the dated plutocratic liberal-democratic system of international relations.⁹ While historians have addressed certain aspects of the Third Reich's elaborations on Axis internationalism, very few accounts have explored how various occupied states responded to this new concept of Europe. In particular, it still remains largely unclear how the occupied territories in the Balkans and Eastern Europe understood their own place in the New Europe and how they resolved the major contradiction between the Nazi talk of Europeanization and the extreme brutality of their occupation policies. This is the historiographical lacuna which this article aims to fill. It explores how a Balkan government under severe military occupation responded to the 'Europeanization' of the Nazi rhetoric, to rhetorical as well as practical inconsistencies that abounded in the Nazi treatment of the South-Eastern territories, and how it made sense of the *Untermenschen* campaigns that, among others, directly targeted the Serbian population. It also aims to find out how all these various factors and arguments were negotiated into the local context, adapted to local needs and purposes and combined with some already existing concepts and debates. Answers to all these questions can help us better understand the nature, credibility and extent of the Third Reich's European project on the continent's margins. As this article will demonstrate, regardless of the incoherence and insincerity of the Nazi internationalism, the New Europe was an idea which gained some credence even among those populations, the assertion of whose inferiority constituted the ideological core of National Socialism's vision of Europe and the world.

In this article, therefore, I trace the interwar development and wartime transformation of the political and intellectual debates regarding the modernization of Serbia/Yugoslavia, the role of the Balkans in the broader European civilization, and the most appropriate path to becoming a member of the 'European family of nations.' In the first half of the article, I primarily focus on the inter-war Serbian intelligentsia, and their discussions of various forms of international cultural, political and civilizational links and settings. These discussions centrally addressed the issue of Yugoslavia's (and Serbia's) 'Europeanness' and cultural identity in the context of the state's complex cultural-historical legacies. This part of the article examines the pronouncements of mainstream liberal intellectuals and public figures, but then also traces the development of far-right intellectual and political discussions, offering historical background to the Serbian collaborationist intellectuals' debates during the WWII occupation which are considered in the second half of the article. After exploring the conundrums of interwar

modernization/Europeanization discussions, I go on to analyze the dramatic changes in such intellectual outlooks after 1941, asking how Europe and European cultural/political integration were imagined in occupied Serbia, and whether the realities of the occupation could accommodate these earlier debates.

While the conceptualization of the East-West relationship as one of cultural/civilizational inferiority and superiority emerged as the dominant discourse and the founding assumption of the prewar debates, a major aspect of the wartime discussions seemed to be the dissolution of this overarching dichotomy. This occurred primarily due to the political context, and the necessity to express support for Germany's policies, goals and alliances and to follow the lead of the Nazi propaganda. When these pressing policy issues, as well as the influence of the Nazi rhetoric of European harmony, unity and solidarity, combined with the already existing local conceptual framework, the basic prewar assumptions appeared to break up and a different approach to the problem of Serbia's role in the European context began to form. As Yves Durand argues, the 'banner of the construction of the 'New Europe' and the 'Crusade against Bolshevism' in protection of Europe's core civilizational values were rhetorical motives common to virtually all collaborating regimes in Nazi Europe.¹⁰ Building on such German propaganda discourses, the Serbian government also continued to address one of the central problems of the prewar debates. This problem focused on what exactly Serbia's place in Europe was, and how the relationship between Serbia and Europe should be thought about. Ironically, the chaos of the wartime years offered an alternative to the conundrums of prewar internationalism and liberal, Western-oriented imaginations of Europe, which often frustrated Yugoslav and Serbian intellectuals because they relied on linear concepts of historical development and viewed the Eastern territories as domains of 'primitivism' and cultural backwardness. Instead, it was in Nazi-dominated Europe marred by genocide, extreme racism and brutal violence that Serbia's collaborationist intellectuals saw the more inclusive and potentially diverse continent they had been seeking in their inter-war ruminations. This wartime imagination of European harmony and inclusiveness in occupied Serbia demonstrated the enormous contradictions of the Third Reich's language of European cooperation, but also revealed its incredible potency in those regions of Europe which felt betrayed and abandoned by the interwar international order and its mentors, France and the UK.

Modernization debates

After its creation in 1918 under the leadership of the Serbian Karadjordjevic dynasty, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes attempted to deal with a complicated tapestry of its diverse political and cultural legacies. The task of nation-building was coupled with economic reforms and political modernization and Westernization, and it was made exceptionally difficult by the dramatic failure of the parliamentary system and the onset of the international economic crisis. When King Alexander instituted his personal dictatorship in January 1929, renaming the state into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, this intensified the efforts to create a modern unitary Yugoslav national identity out of 'obsolete' and 'provincial' ethnic 'tribes.' The project was cut short when Alexander was assassinated in

France in 1934. The years immediately preceding the outbreak of WWII were an era of intense modernization impulses in the economy, politics as well as cultural policies. Moreover, the period following 1935 opened up significant public space for serious political debates regarding the state's position and future in the international context, something that would have been very difficult under the circumstances of Alexander's dictatorship.¹¹

It was in the intellectual and artistic journals of the time that the nature and course of modernization were being debated most vigorously. The interwar Yugoslav intellectual scene was remarkably diverse, and different platforms for modernisation, Europeanisation and national reform were proposed across the political and ideological board. Regardless of the direction and content of such political-cultural debates, one of the central themes they revolved around was the civilisational position of Yugoslavia (and the Balkans) in relation to the broader (West) European cultural heritage. In many ways, the conceptualisation of Yugoslavia as not only a political but also a cultural periphery determined the tone and character of these intellectual discussions: Yugoslavia's modernising elites very much focused on the meaning of 'East' and 'West' in historical and civilisational terms, and understood that the content of their Europeanization programmes depended on their definition of the exact relationship between Eastern and Western cultural legacies within the Yugoslav 'national character.' As Predrag Palavestra argued regarding the most influential Serbian literature journal of the first half of the twentieth century, *Srpski knjizevni glasnik*, those local 'Westerners' who founded the periodical aimed to 'include their country in Europe, and institute European cultural norms at home'. Moreover, they strove to 'open [Serbia's] windows to the world' and advance the 'neglected moral knowledge of their people.'¹² At the same time, however, Serbian and Yugoslav intellectuals such as those gathered around *Glasnik* functioned within a debilitating intellectual dichotomy: their goal was to bring their local culture closer to Europe, but at the same time to also preserve the national cultural roots and not discard those forms of cultural creation which reinforced the 'national spirit' and feelings.

Some of the central characteristics, concerns and conclusions of Yugoslavia's pre-WWII modernization debates were outlined in the editorial to the first issue of *XX vek* [Twentieth century], an elite-oriented Belgrade-based monthly focusing on 'literature, science, art and society,' but also featuring numerous lengthy political analyses. In January 1938, the monthly's editor Ranko Mladenovic defined the debate's core terms, introducing the foundational assumptions and perceived cultural-political goals of the period. The direction of the state's development was decisively and uncompromisingly 'Western (or 'European', since the two terms were often used interchangeably), because the Yugoslav nation's place in the family of the 'advanced West' had been 'ascertained, even preordained.' The central notion here was lateness with all of its cultural, political, social implications: 'we had a long pause, but shall be late no more.' Thus, with the new state entering the metaphorical twentieth century as late as 1918, the task of redefining what the editorial referred to as the 'spiritual national essence' became in effect one of revising the existing cultural values, and revisiting, remolding

and 'choosing from' the hitherto glorified national traditions (and inevitably, rejecting some as non-conforming to the country's new Westernized self-image). Such a conscious and public instrumentalization of nation-building as a road to modernization was indeed striking. The predominant national narrative was thereby explicitly cut off from the usual legitimizing devices such as appeals to a national culture's organic, ancient nature, and its mystical and unchangeable relationship to the people. The central mission, with which Yugoslavia's cultural and political elites were seen to be entrusted, was 'mercilessness in criticism', 'strict revision of values', especially by those 'generations born after our greatest national epic tragedies.' These generations were expected to be much more willing to distance their definitions of a new national consensus from unacceptable or inappropriate (i.e. overly 'Eastern') cultural legacies. It was important 'not to lose the idea of national community and uniqueness' but 'we need to leave behind the traditional epic verse of our past', and value and admire 'our ancestors as *precious memories*' rather than the bearers of the nation's cultural contributions to the world. The latter role belonged to the new (and Western) spiritual tendencies of the educated classes, the new elites.¹³

Milan Curcin, Serbian poet, writer and editor of a very influential interwar intellectual journal, *Nova Evropa* (New Europe, 1920-1941), insisted on the idea of 'Europeanisation,' which meant 'working on everything that is cultured and advanced, and fighting against orientalism and all things backward.'¹⁴ On the pages of Zagreb-based, pro-Yugoslav and pro-West European *Nova Evropa*, Great Britain emerged as the ultimate model for cultural and political nation-building, 'a goal and an ideal', because Britain constituted 'the best social and political school for peoples who are still being taught civilisation.'¹⁵ In a similar vein, the idea of lagging behind captured Curcin's conceptualisation of the relationship between Yugoslavia and France: the Yugoslavs needed much better shoes in order to be able to 'walk in step with, or right behind, France', which marched on at the forefront of civilisation.¹⁶ This was no surprise: *Nova Evropa*, as Curcin's ambitious and utopian intellectual project, took its intellectual, political and cultural inspiration from Hugh Seton-Watson's slightly older journal of the same title, which was published in London from 1916 until 1920 and promoted the ideology of a 'spiritual rebirth of Europe' under the auspices of the League of Nations and its West European creators and guardians. For both Seton-Watson and the editorial board of the Zagreb-based journal, the moral and material interests of East and Southeast European states would be best protected and advanced if they nurtured and furthered their political, cultural and civilisation links with the United Kingdom.

As Andrew Wachtel showed, those intellectuals and artists who participated most prominently in the project of constructing a unified Yugoslav cultural and national identity in the interwar years were particularly concerned with different ways of synthesising 'authentic' national traditions and West European modernism. This was to prove increasingly contentious, as myriad cultural and political debates demonstrated in the 1930s. Ivan Mestrovic, the leading interwar sculptor and artistic ideologue of Yugoslav unitarism, faced heavy criticism from both the political right and left as he attempted in his statues to express folkloric themes in distinctly modern, non-traditional and non-Yugoslav European

forms: 'Mestrovic's European classicism modified by contemporary Central European technique proved incomprehensible and unacceptable to large numbers of Serbs while many of his opponents questioned his ability to capture the 'essence' of the national character in his eclectic sculptures.' Moreover, some saw Mestrovic's work to be contaminating 'their own traditions with foreign methods.' One of Mestrovic's fiercest critics, brilliant Marxist writer Miroslav Krleža, asserted that there was indeed no religion, Yugoslav nationalism or authentic folklore in Mestrovic's sculpture. In fact, Krleža went much further and doubted the very possibility of any such synthesis in principle. In his 1932 novel, *Povratak Filipa Latinovicza* (The Return of Filip Latinovicz), for instance, Krleža implied that Yugoslav progressive and Westernised intellectuals' attempts at nation-building and modernisation through developing some concept of a 'Europeanised local culture' were bound to end in failure and tragedy.¹⁷ When the novel's main character, successful modernist painter Filip Latinovicz, decides to return to his home village in Croatia after spending many years in Paris, he realises that he has no way of communicating with local villagers: as Krleža put it, although 'they spoke the same language, ...they were two languages and two continents.' Furthermore, Krleža spared no mercy for the local Croatian pro-European and European-educated elite, whom he depicted as mindless and vile caricatures without any intellectual substance, let alone a coherent cultural programme.¹⁸

This tension between preserving the traditional cultural legacies ('the nation's sense of self') and the perceived pressing need to modernize and conform to the 'universal' cultural standards as manifested by the West European civilizational scale consistently ran through most interwar discussions: of artistic achievements, scientific developments, political roles and misfortunes of 'small peoples' in the global context. But large sections of the pro-European Yugoslav intelligentsia did believe that the task of the cultural and political elites was precisely what Krleža mocked: casting off those symbols, historical narratives and cultural achievements that had formed the core of the nation's cultural authenticity in the past. The necessity to remain on the 'Western course' and to re-build after the 'Western model' while not turning into sterile imitators produced a number of contradictory discourses and precepts. B. Todorovic's article dealing with the contemporary state of Bulgarian art, for instance, was full of comparisons with Yugoslavia, more specifically Serbia, on historical and cultural grounds. The cultural geography of the East-West symbolism was the central assumption and a recurrent theme of this piece, which, like many others, grappled with how to invent new, equally authentic 'traditions' more in line with the expectations of the 'West.'¹⁹ There did not seem to be any coherent solution to the paradox: becoming relevant in the European context could only be achieved through adhering to modern Western traditions, yet if one nation's art did not express its own culturally specific 'collective consciousness,' it was not likely to have any intrinsic civilizational value. And since the 'eastern character' of the Serbian and Bulgarian 'national essences' was fundamentally at odds with Europe's 'superior' occidental cultural system, it would be next to impossible to hold on to it as the basis of a modern artistic expression. The very core

and meaning of the Balkan cultural legacy and specificity would need to be thoroughly revised. However, that brought one back to valueless emulation.

Defining Istanbul as the symbol of 'lost faith and worn-out tradition,' this discourse portrayed the Ottoman Empire's legacies in patently negative terms. 'The entire Istanbul is a museum', proclaimed M. Svetovski victoriously in his article about the young Turkish republic: 'the Turkish middle ages were finally over in 1923 and a new historical age had begun.' Svetovski's article offered avid support to Mustafa Kemal's modernization reforms, which 'crossed out' the humiliating, painful and bloody history of the Ottoman Balkans, punishing the backward-looking former capital of the Ottoman Empire by turning it into an abode of 'shadows and cemeteries.'²⁰ Ataturk was indeed the ultimate symbol of modern national politics and contemporary - Western - cultural trends, which this group of Yugoslav intellectuals aimed to emulate, and this discourse explicitly refused to acknowledge that Ottoman historical and cultural legacies might have had any lasting civilizational value: they were at best mere, often bizarre, museum curiosities.²¹

The hitherto cherished culture - patriarchal traditions, oriental in their essence, and therefore civilizationally inferior - was to be abandoned, and the distinct spiritual character 'as expressed throughout history' was, paradoxically, to be built anew, in clear separation from that very history. For instance, in his essay on the nature of language and verse in Serbian literature and poetry, Stanislav Vinaver argued that the main obstacle on the path of joining modern European civilization and reaching Europe's artistic standards was the outdated, epic language and decasyllabic rhythm of South Slav literature. According to Vinaver, even modern literature in Serbia and Yugoslavia retained this 'language of patriarchal villages' and their epic poetry, which could no more express the nuances and abstractions of modern individuality. Vinaver proposed a thorough modernization of the language, and replacing decasyllabic verses with the modern language of Westernized cities such as Belgrade.²² But it was unclear where the sought for 'authenticity of the national expression' would be located. Yugoslavia's art and culture was becoming 'indissolubly bound in the ties of western example and has not yet succeeded in assimilating sufficient local influences to raise it to the status of a separate school with distinct ethnic and national characteristics which would serve to mark it out as a distinctive group within the sphere of western civilization.'²³ Even worse, it was in the phase of 'an absolute reliance upon, and assimilation of, western tendencies without struggle and without opposition' - it was turning into a mindless imitator.²⁴

Under the circumstances, many authors attempted to resolve the modernization and authenticity conundrum by positing, somewhat awkwardly, that Eastern influences were just a "thin veneer," temporarily superimposed on a profoundly Western character of the Balkans generally, and Yugoslavia more specifically, and invested major efforts into proving the 'essentially' European nature of the Serbian culture.²⁵ This was suggested most ominously through a variety of increasingly popular anthropological and ethnological racial arguments, such as Branimir Males' thesis that, by its

biological constitution, Yugoslavia's 'Dinaric race,' unlike other East European - 'Asiatic' - peoples, was genetically tied to the Nordic racial group.²⁶ The entire Dinaric debate, inspired partly by the ethnological and geographical research and writings of the celebrated Serbian anthropogeographer Jovan Cvijic, purported to prove not only that the Yugoslav 'race' existed biologically, well before the creation of the (increasingly dysfunctional) Yugoslav state, but also directly countered Central and West European anthropological, psychiatric and ethnographic arguments regarding the 'primitivism' and 'brutality' of eastern Slavs.²⁷ According to the head of Yugoslavia's Central Hygiene Institute in Belgrade, Stevan Ivanic, even though the 'purest types' of the Nordic race could be found in Sweden or Norway, it was very well spread among 'Baltic Aryans and Slavs.'²⁸ The increasingly influential right-wing discourse on biological races and racism offered a simple solution to the issue of identity, backwardness and modernisation within the East-West binary, by constructing a distinction between biological 'essences' - which supposedly tied the populations of the Balkans and Yugoslavia firmly to the advanced Western civilisation - and fickle historical, environmental factors. However, as historian Olivera Milosavljevic correctly noted, Yugoslavia's racial theorists had one remarkable problem with the National Socialist brand of racism: it 'glorified the "Nordic" race and neglected the value of the "Dinaric" race.' In response, the Yugoslav and Serbian racial theory of the 1930s vehemently denied the Dinaric race's purported inferiority, and thus encountered a conundrum very similar to that tackled by interwar liberal intellectuals, artists and scientists. It attempted to resolve it in a variety of ways: it sought to prove the extraordinary role of the Dinaric racial type in the advancement of the global and European civilisations, to posit a fundamental compatibility between the Nordic and Dinaric racial groups - so that their mixing resulted in a 'high quality' of the offspring - and ultimately to insist on their extreme proximity or even complete identity.²⁹ Moreover, Males even claimed that 'Dinaroids' were both intellectually and physically superior to and 'more authentically European' than either the Mediterranean or the Nordic 'races.' For Svetislav Stefanovic, similarly, the Dinaric type was by the end of the 1930s in fact preferable to the previously dominant yet rapidly declining Nordic racial group: he speculated that the Nordic race might have fulfilled its historical mission and was quickly losing its leadership qualities, and should therefore be replaced by the Dinaric man, who carried fresh ideas for social, cultural and political re-organisation.³⁰ In a similar vein, Anthropologist Vladimir Dvornikovic saw the Dinaric race as 'the most manly of all European races', and the embodiment of the male warrior type.³¹

Searching for alternatives to the Western model in the interwar period

The difficulty facing all those who attempted to resolve the problem of modernization within the existing concept of Europe led several groups of intellectuals in Yugoslavia and the Balkans to look for alternative interpretations of the history and nature of European civilization. These intellectuals usually came from the far left and the far right, and their challenges to the established

norms of progress and backwardness aimed to unsettle liberal cultural geographies, and mirrored political attacks on the liberal international order. For instance, interwar psychoanalysts gathered around the Surrealist circle and highly polemical avant-garde journal *Zenith* drew on their Marxist leanings and Freudian theory of human instincts in order to sharply criticize European civilization – as brutal, cannibalistic and depraved, 'old and tired' from over-culturation and founded on theft and crime. They argued that the Balkans were not lagging behind Europe, and offered a provocative alternative to the mainstream project of modernizing the country along the Western lines. Instead of aiming to constantly minimize the gap between the “backward” Balkans and “civilized” Europe, these Marxist-Freudian intellectuals proposed to Balkanize Europe and thereby protect it from rotting under the burden of its own cultured cruelty. They in fact “converted a presumed Balkan cultural deficiency into a Barbarian virtue” and rejected the West’s “excessive rationality,” contrasting it with the Balkan “eruption of the inner need for liberation.”³² Relying on a particular reading of Freud, they forged the concept of *Barbarogenius* – a raw but youthful and energetic Balkan man, a primordial force capable of healing and ‘revaluing’, an irrational yet creative being – which stood at the core of their critique. The redemptive Barbarogenius, the very opposite of Western civilization, its education, manners and high culture, had the unique power to heal European ‘pseudoculture’, to ‘decivilize’ it and save it from certain decline by ‘fertilizing’ it with fresh and healthy blood.³³ The construction of this figure thus served to subvert the interwar discourse of the Balkans as the ‘Orient of Europe,’ and the extreme irreverence served the purpose beautifully. As famous poet Rade Drainac said, ‘We have had enough of licking the boots of Catholicism, the Pope in Rome and the Gallic waves of Paris!’³⁴

The most relevant for the direction of the modernization debates during WWII was a group of public intellectuals, state functionaries and scholars who gradually moved towards right-wing and far-right organizations such as Dimitrije Ljotic's Yugoslav Nationalist Movement, also known as *Zbor* (Rally). This was a pro-fascistic yet highly conservative political association, which received steady financial and political support from Germany since its foundation in 1935, and which espoused an extreme anti-Communist, anti-liberal and anti-individualist ideological programme. *Zbor* was a marginal political phenomenon in the interwar years, and did not succeed in receiving more than 1% of electoral support throughout the 1930s.³⁵ However, Ljotic and his close political associates were to become the decisive political factor during the subsequent Nazi occupation of Serbia. *Zbor* advocated a return to the archaic cultural and religious traditions of the Yugoslav nation, and heavily criticised the political course and influence of Western democracies; unsurprisingly, this ideological stance profoundly shaped its adherents' contributions to the modernisation debates.

Some of the *Zbor* sympathisers were gathered around Belgrade's Balkan Institute, while others were prominent writers and public figures such as famous interwar authors Vladimir Vujic, Stanislav Krakov, Vladimir Velmar-Jankovic.³⁶ They attempted to offer an alternative view of the Balkans’ Ottoman historical legacy, thereby disputing the narrative of the West’s absolute and well-deserved

supremacy.³⁷ These dissenting discourses also bitterly opposed Western Europe's long-lasting intellectual practices of 'cultural othering' with regard to Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the Orient in general.³⁸ Svetozar Spanacevic, a co-founder of the Institute and an important political figure in the subsequent wartime collaborationist regime, for instance, viewed the political and cultural legacies of the East as remarkable and positive in themselves, arguing that they constituted an integral part of the most advanced achievements of contemporary civilization and a cultural and historical heritage from which the West could even learn.³⁹ At times, he seemed to speak directly to those participants in the Yugoslav modernization debates who had internalized such a distorted image of their own region, 'who were ashamed of their nationality' and even 'felt hurt if they were called Balkanians.'⁴⁰ What the Ottoman power contributed to the cultures of the Balkan Christians was not merely invasion and destruction: they also brought with them 'the Moslem ideal of the protection of the weak and the poor, and introduced many benevolent social institutions. The Turks gave the Balkans the eastern urbane civilisation with its public institutions,... They taught the Balkanians that neighbour should be respected more than a relative, thereby creating the necessary basis for religious and social tolerance.'⁴¹ Thus, while the cultural core of the Balkans was notably different from many Western legacies and traditions, Spanacevic by no means saw the 'East' to be civilizationally subordinated to the Occident. Nor was there ever a fundamental, unbridgeable gap, an essential incompatibility between the two cultures that would require the Balkan region to relinquish one altogether in order to become an honourable member of the other (particularly because, in his opinion, some of the 'Eastern' contributions were to be found at the historical roots of the Western traditions). Velmar-Jankovic went a step further, arguing that Balkan people were not Europeans and neither were they striving to be, because they had, fortunately, been shielded from European civilizational influences (such as Humanism and Renaissance) by the long Ottoman rule, and had instead been shaped by different, more valuable cultural values.⁴² In the years following the disintegration of Yugoslavia and its occupation by the Axis powers, it was precisely these and similar views that would gain prominence and re-define the core terms of the Europeanization and modernization debates.

By the second half of the 1930s, the international relations within Europe made it easier for such outspoken critics of liberal and Western tendencies to justify their viewpoints with convincing arguments. It was not only that Yugoslavia itself was re-orienting its foreign policy aims and restructuring its alliances; the entire liberal international order crumbled in front of the eyes of Yugoslav observers, while national parliamentary systems appeared uniquely unsuited to respond to the social, political and economic challenges of the time. In that context, the anti-liberal and anti-Western invectives of far-right political figures such as Ljotic and Jonic started resonating with the mainstream political orientation of the country, and gained more credence as analyses of the sources of the international political crisis. Ljotic regularly seized the opportunity to emphasise that liberal democracy, imported from the West, harmed the country immensely, making it vulnerable to Communist

destruction. Well before the outbreak of WWII and the occupation, therefore, *Zbor* criticised the tendency of Yugoslav intellectuals and politicians to 'mimic the West'. In the far-right political and intellectual circles, the profound delegitimation of liberal democracy meant that the glorification of the Western political and social achievements was not viable anymore, and the Western civilisational heritage, however defined, could not be held up as a model for emulation anymore. The development and strengthening of political, economic and cultural links with Germany, and the celebration of Germany's political role and achievements in Yugoslavia's press, worked to reinforce these points. According to Stefanovic, Yugoslavia finally needed to rid itself of the 'fatal influence of Western democracies'.¹⁴³

Instead, this group of politicians and intellectuals, who would become the leading political figures under the wartime collaborationist regime of Milan Nedic, advocated a politics of national authenticity, locating the source of Yugoslavia's political, social and economic difficulties in its elites' eagerness to import and imitate foreign political ideologies and systems. For interwar fascist theoretician Danilo Gregoric, the failure of 'pseudo-liberal' states was evident not only in Yugoslavia but across the whole of Europe; on the other hand, national regeneration could only happen on authentic national principles, and political state needed to be a true expression of the unique national spirit of each people.¹⁴⁴ If political structures were expressions of the national character and consciousness, Yugoslav politicians, intellectuals, sociologists and economists would have to think hard about 'which forms would be best suited for our own nation to achieve its national regeneration.' 'We have our own medicine for our own illness', urged Ljotic. Velibor Jonic, who later became the Minister of Education in the Serbian collaborationist government, lamented in 1935 that the conundrum facing the Yugoslavs was that 'they had not participated in creating the European civilisation but are being forced to pay for its debts'.¹⁴⁵ Jonic believed that the country was pushed to choose 'between Europe and Asia', but that the only right answer was to focus on the authentic national traditions. In the paramount civilisational clash they were witnessing, the Yugoslavs would need to select neither side if they were to survive.

In *Zbor's* interpretation, this politics of national authenticity necessitated the realisation of the 'organic' national regeneration of Yugoslavia on a peasant basis, which would make it possible for her to finally assume a 'dignified place in the New European Order.' It was only through this unashamed return to the ethnic, 'tribal' and primordial folkloric traditions that Yugoslavia could gain any semblance of respectability and dignity in an international context. The pro-fascist right in the 1930s celebrated the (Serbian) countryside and its cultural-political role in a new Yugoslav community: 'the peasant mentality and peasant culture will ensure the white race's predominance over the other existing races, and will become a bastion against which all imperialist and destructive ways will break'.¹⁴⁶ If Yugoslavia (or Serbia) were to join the European family of nations on an equal footing, this could not be done by mindlessly copying political formulae suited to different national characters and consciousness; instead,

the peasant culture was meant to become the founding block of the state and the 'source of national life' and authenticity.⁴⁷

As we will see below, the outbreak of the war cemented the ideological platform of the right wing. They mourned what they saw as the tragic short-sightedness of the organisers of the March 1941 coup, which overthrew the Yugoslav government three days after it signed accession to the Tripartite Pact and provoked Germany's assault in early April. In 1942, well into the occupation, Gregoric lamented this missed opportunity, claiming that the only way for Yugoslavia to become a respectable member of the international community and a significant factor in the Southeast of Europe was to side with Germany politically, because the 'new face of Europe' demanded a recalibration of international relations.⁴⁸ In similar vein, Stefanovic claimed that a new, more socially just European order had offered Yugoslavia an unprecedented opportunity for future growth, political importance and success, and guaranteed its honour and borders, but that the internal enemies had decided to ally the country with the decaying West and plunge it into a disaster. During the occupation years, this rejection of the West European model of modernity and progress marked the political discourse, as collaborationist intellectuals searched for ideological solutions beyond the East-West binary.

Dissolving the boundary: The occupation regime 1941-1944

The German regime in rump Serbia implemented some of the most brutal occupation policies and practices in the entire Nazi Europe. The cumulative effects of forced labor, detention and execution of the 'politically unreliable,' constant economic exploitation and food requisitioning were severely worsened by the harsh reprisals in response to the developing armed rebellion of the Communist and nationalist forces. The initial German plan not to set up a collaborationist regime with political and governmental duties needed to be changed as the situation with the guerrilla resistance deteriorated and no further reinforcement of the German troops in Serbia was allowed due to the Eastern front demands. In that context, the originally installed purely administrative body functioning under the firm German auspices proved inefficient, and what was suggested was 'reorganizing and strengthening the Serbian administration so that the Serbs themselves might crush the rebellion.'⁴⁹

The puppet government of General Milan Nedic, a high-ranking prewar military officer and politician with favourable popular reputation, was thus established in August 1941. From the very beginning of the German occupation, Ljotic served as one of the most important men in the collaborationist setting in Serbia: he immediately founded the Serbian Volunteers' Corps (SDK) which was integrated in the Wehrmacht; members of *Zbor* joined the collaborationist cabinet, while Ljotic himself became a Commissar for the Rebuilding of the City of Smederevo. Ljotic's actual political influence extended well beyond what his official title suggested. He had a privileged access to the

German military and occupation authorities in Serbia: although he never formally joined Nedic's government, maintained significant influence over its decision-making and plans throughout the war years. Still, the government's authorities were heavily restricted from the very outset, and they only shrank as time went on and the government failed to secure popular backing, pacify the population and eliminate the military rebellion. The government functioned under the constant German threats of even more brutal anti-civilian retaliations, executions of the most prominent members of the intelligentsia, dismemberment and occupation of Serbia by the other Axis forces, etc. According to Tomasevich, 'the Serbian puppet government was so subservient to the German occupation authorities [that] it cannot truly be said that it had its own policies in any field of government activity. It was simply an auxiliary organ of the German occupation regime.'⁵⁰ Distrusted by the political and SS elements in the Nazi apparatus, the government's activity was largely reduced to low-level administration, pro-German propaganda efforts and pointing out to the population the futility of any anti-German operations.

Under such circumstances, Serbia's political and intellectual elites needed to express their unswerving loyalty to Germany's mission and uncompromisingly side with it in strategic military and political terms. Regardless of anyone's 'genuine' ideological convictions, it was crucial for Nedic's entourage to gain the trust of the German authorities in South East Europe and Berlin. In Serbian wartime journals and newspapers, therefore, one of the most frequent motifs was the defamation of Great Britain and its conduct in political as well as cultural and civilizational terms.⁵¹ However, as we saw, the crux of the prewar discourse on Europe and Yugoslavia's/Serbia's place in it depended in a very important sense on the positive evaluation of Great Britain's cultural, political, and civilizational role. England for all purposes came to symbolize both the 'West' itself, which became the all-pervasive political and cultural goal of the intellectual mainstream in the 1930s, as well as Serbia's purported 'Western national essence' (or at least the ability to acquire it), its undeniable belonging to the 'advanced family.' If this paradigmatic Western culture was not superior by default anymore, this had to have consequences on how the 'East,' the second part of the disintegrating dichotomy, was to be approached. The breakup of that entire constellation of values was further reinforced by the political necessity to always refer to Britain and the Soviet Union together, as representatives of essentially the same, tightly intertwined negative Other, the arch-enemy of the European New Order. Thus, not only was Great Britain (and the U.S.) now de-mystified and defined as despicable and barbarous, culturally inferior and politically hypocritical. The concepts of East and West were themselves hopelessly conflated and effectively deconstructed through the discourse which posited the equality between London and Moscow (or, even more damningly, maintained that London was in fact subordinated to Stalin's whims). This reinforced *Zbor's* interwar arguments regarding Western liberal democracy and its pernicious cultural and political consequences in the Balkans: the Serbian collaborationist intelligentsia agreed that Serbia needed to disassociate itself at long last from political involvements with and cultural imitation of Western Europe.

It is clear that the anti-British and anti-Soviet writings of pro-Nedic intellectuals and media

outlets was part and parcel of the fierce propaganda war in which they were engaged not only against Great Britain and the Bolsheviks, but also against the Yugoslav government in exile in London and the Communist-led Yugoslav partisan movement. But this does not diminish the enormous significance of such new discourses: these novel political and propagandistic postulates radically transformed the core concepts and re-defined the main values of the interwar debates, making it possible for leading collaborationist intellectuals to frame the discussion in completely different ways.

This East-West equality in barbarism was articulated most clearly in April and May 1944, during the Allies' bombing of Belgrade. *Srpski Narod* referred to Great Britain and the U.S. as the 'new wild hordes of barbarians from the West' and the 'enlightened vandals.' Following Moscow's order, they were attempting to enslave Europe, and, in concert with the barbarians from the East, destroy the European culture and civilization, and turn the European peoples into objects of the British-American plutocratic exploitation and Communist experimentation.⁵² Such confused proclamations implied that the 'European culture and civilization' were by all means precious, superior and worth a sacrifice, but they also clearly constructed them as neither necessarily Eastern nor Western, since their opponents came from both East and West. The new cultural geography seemed to function in a different way, and, quite surprisingly, outside the dichotomy which defined the prewar debates in such a clear-cut manner.

From the very start of the occupation, articles abounded which warned against the 'shameful, deadly alliance of the Judeo-Masonic Anglo-Saxon exploitation and the Red Beast.'⁵³ The Nazi vision of European harmony was contrasted with the alleged aggression, treachery, cynicism, selfishness of the 'plutocratic cultures' of England and America.⁵⁴ In addition, frequent references were made to the prewar discourses of British benevolence as various authors dejectedly announced their disappointment with the 'quasi-friend' who had always only been interested in fomenting discord among and within European states, and acted as a 'dark, destructive force' throughout the history of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.⁵⁵ England was portrayed as a 'hyena that sucks blood and life out of all other nations on its way.' Her history was 'full of unspeakable crimes' which testified to its eternal amorality and barbarism.⁵⁶

In fact, as the Belgrade daily *Novo Vreme* established, England was now the 'eternal enemy of Europe', and continued its attempts to prevent Germany from completing its 'European task'. Soon after the Third Reich's attack on the Soviet Union, the Serbian collaborationist press began insisting that Victoria 'not only signified Germany's certain victory but was also a sign, clearer than ever, of the victory of the entire European continent', because Germany fought 'for Europe and in the interests of Europe.' Europe was finally united, finally emerging from slumber and growing aware of itself and its importance, and this was proven by the 'flood of volunteers' from all over the continent who yearned to fight for the German forces. Moreover, the pan-European support for the German actions was portrayed as a 'plebiscite', with ordinary people from Norway and Holland, Poland, Serbia and Bulgaria rejoicing at the rebirth of Europe under the new banner of Germany's unprecedented triumph.⁵⁷ The wave of hopefulness and great expectations of German victory was said to have enveloped both Eastern and

Western Europe, bonding all in their wish for rejuvenation through German arms. Importantly, unlike the old liberal Europe with its complicated system of exclusions and inclusions, this rejuvenated continent 'made place for every ethnic or natural historical specificity in a common defence.'⁵⁸

Another factor introducing serious and disorienting changes into the previous discourse based on the East-West dichotomy was the need to refer to Japan as an ally, glorify its foreign policy aims and rhetoric, and talk about its 'different' culture and civilization in exceptionally affirmative terms. With Japan, the East-West conceptual divide received its final blow. Not only was the West not necessarily superior; not only was the East in the specific case of Bolshevism and the Soviet Union absolutely identical in its evil and barbarous nature to the erstwhile symbol of Western civilization. Now, the 'East' as expressed in Japan - non-European, exotic, supposedly traditional and 'backward'- becomes for all purposes superior to all other forces, and indeed admirable. The way Japan was now talked about differed markedly from the 'yellow danger from the East' discourse of the 'racial experts' turned journalists of the late 1930s in Yugoslavia. In contrast to the earlier image of the Asian country as modernizing yet racially, biologically (and civilizationally) incapable of ever attaining the level of the West, wartime contributors now criticized the very rhetoric which would describe Japan as a symbol of 'Eastern backwardness.' Although it had been constantly defamed as a state of 'small people, 'backwardness,' low living standards and poverty, Japan managed to become one of the most consistent fighters against Communism,' i.e. the foremost defender of civilization against barbarity. Here, the East protected the superior culture from, among others, the West itself. In addition, in some narratives of Japan's history, the West (white missionaries, merchants, 'Kulturtraeger') figured as a source of evil, a factor that prevented advancement and betterment instead of promoting it.⁵⁹ Moreover, Europe, led by Germany, and East Asia stood solemnly together in their struggle against Bolshevism and the 'hysterical' plutocrats in England: 'Europe and East Asia will raise an iron wall around themselves' to protect their political organisms against the Communist disease.⁶⁰

The anti-West rhetoric, therefore, appeared to turn on its head many of the core interwar postulates regarding civilization and the nature of the modern state; instead of earlier glorifications of urban settings, Western scientific achievements and modern European art, collaborationist wartime press insisted that such achievements of the 'West' were 'poisonous', fully delegitimized and even 'anti-Christian.' This historical and cultural legacy had nothing to do with the Serbian culture: to the contrary, Serbs had very little in common with Americans and the English (the latter were not even 'genuine Europeans'), but were 'spiritually' much closer to the German 'sense of justice' as well as the 'samurai spirit' of the Japanese!⁶¹

An even more explicit reversal of the values of 'East' and 'West' as, respectively, inferior and superior, sources of decay and progress, occurred in the context of the pragmatically adopted Nazi-like anti-imperialist rhetoric. It was directed, again, against Great Britain and encompassed topics as broad as India, Africa (most notably Egypt), the Middle East, South America. Numerous lengthy treatises on Indian politics, culture, history, literature, religion criticized the 'British rhetoric of superiority and

detestation' with regard to the local population, the rhetoric that some of the most prominent prewar intellectuals had themselves internalized. Revisiting India's history, one of the authors opined that cultural, religious and political influences of the Tatar and Mongol conquerors and rulers of India 'injected novel, fresh, constructive impulses.' On the other hand, 'India's contacts with the West in more recent times brought to [the country] much misfortune, tragedy, unhappiness.'⁶² For Gandhi, furthermore, Great Britain and the values it stood for meant the supreme 'source of evil.' That, metaphorically speaking, East could be West and West could be East in both superiority and barbarity led these authors to conclude that there was nothing inherently lowly nor advanced about either. Only in this conceptual context could the well-known Nazi propaganda line, that 'it should not be considered God's will that such a big, potentially wealthy state must be ruled by a [handful] of supposedly noble white Europeans,' sound at all credible and convincing.⁶³ Moreover, India was depicted as essentially similar to Europe - a continent of different yet harmonious peoples mutually connected through a bond of 'communal destiny.' Interpenetration of eastern religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, created a rich cultural environment, whose unique 'religious and philosophical ideas have exerted an immense formative influence on humankind in general,' something that, in the prewar discourses, used to be the exclusive duty, the 'holy mission' of Europe as Western civilization.⁶⁴ This peculiar and unexpected admiration for the value of mixing - racial, cultural, religious - ran through the writings on the colonial world, and this would be particularly important for the wartime redefinitions of the notion of Europe, its culture and civilization.⁶⁵

These shifts had significant implications for how Serbian collaborationist authors constructed and revised the concept of Europe, whose integral cultural and civilizational part Serbia wanted to be(come). The value of racial, cultural, religious, civilizational mixing was one of the central elements in this transforming rhetoric. The rhetorical strategy of dissolving the East-West conceptual boundaries and moving away from the notion of racial purity in the broader, global context was now repeated within the confines of Europe: the 'organic unity' of Europe rested on a most diverse legacy and powerful historical interpenetration of both Eastern and Western civilizations. In this narrative extra-European cultural, scientific and artistic influences and trends were deemed no less valuable, remarkable and formative of what was termed the 'common European consciousness.' In fact, the very diversity of European peoples, cultures and faiths gave Europe 'its steel powers, of wealth and worth.'⁶⁶ In a Europe of both Eastern and Western essences and with such a fascinating history of cultural amalgamation and assimilation, there was hardly any place for distinctions between the superior and the inferior. This context was particularly conducive for 'proving' Serbia's equal membership in the European family, and perhaps also for disputing the anti-government and anti-German propaganda which persistently pointed out the actual role of Slavs in the National-Socialist ideology.

Even when wartime authors spoke of Western Europe in positive terms and as a model for emulation, its cultural and geographical meanings were radically different. As Svetislav Stefanovic argued soon after the onset of the German occupation, Serbia had no other option at this moment of

massive social overturn with global implications but to join Europe on its new revolutionary path of nationalist awakening and social reorganization. 'Western Europe' in Stefanovic's article, however, referred to a curious group of states - Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain - while it resolutely excluded the 'rotten' democratic and parliamentary traditions of Great Britain and France. The concept of 'genuine Europe' thus shifted dramatically, and it was the German-inspired combination of socialist and nationalist revolutions that constituted the modern spirit of Europe, which would preserve the glory of the continent and revive its moribund cultural, economic and political potentials.⁶⁷ Ironically, these geo-cultural and geo-political adjustments, which apparently moved beyond rigid civilizational dichotomies, encouraged a range of Serbian collaborationist intellectuals to speculate about the possible inclusiveness of the New Europe, a notion that proved to be painfully misguided.

Following Germany's military operations, several authors informed the Serbian readership of the geographical, cultural, linguistic, historical background of the Caucasus and its peoples, 'on whom the final victory in the East may depend.' After giving an exceptionally idyllic description of the region as home to most admirable landscapes and lifestyles, one author went on to demonstrate how, through cultural interpenetration reaching as far back as the ancient period, historical events, national myths and legends, and literary achievements of these eastern peoples 'on the border between Europe and Asia' became some of the cornerstones of European (Christian) civilization. This worked to prove that the mingling of East and West was at the very roots of Europe. What had been considered second-rate or inferior may now be viewed as equally essential and formative. Favourable comparisons of the Caucasus with Western Europe, and of its peoples with Germanic, Romance, 'Aryan' national characteristics, made it clear that no essential 'civilizational fault lines' were at work here.⁶⁸

On the other hand, the 'West' had had a rather shameful history. The barbarian assault and conquest that destroyed the Roman Empire ushered into a period of unprecedented backwardness in the West, coupled with widespread illiteracy, detestation and violence against any sign of scientific or philosophical erudition. Then, the Byzantine culture as well as the remnants of the Roman legacies were the only ones to continue the flame of cultural survival. Furthermore, 'the spiritual life of the West would have been extinguished altogether, and would have never been renewed had there not been for the Arabic Mohammedan civilization, with its high level of philosophical and scientific sophistication.' Just as in the past the West had not been the sole bearer of progress (and was even a symbol of barbarism and backwardness, with the East taking up the positive role), so now Western civilization as represented by the Allies was nothing more than 'barbarism lit with electricity.' Moreover, the most precious element of Europe's historical development had been the constant interpenetration and exchange of various peoples' influences, trends and achievements at all times. The authentic European cultural legacy was an amalgamation of 'southern, ancient Greek, Germano-Nordic as well as Byzantine-Oriental' accomplishments. Moreover, some of the most significant artists, whose creations must be viewed as the cornerstones of European art and whose style, mastery and influences determined and directed the work of later European artistic geniuses, actually often came from Asia, the Oriental cultures and, most

notably, from Syria. These Eastern influences then helped form the common European consciousness and legacy, the Eastern cultural/artistic element being undeniably present at Europe's cultural roots and in its identity.⁶⁹

In the specifically Serbian context, these dramatic changes transformed how various intellectuals, politicians and journalists wrote about Serbia, its role in Europe and its relationship to its own national legacies. One of the central difficulties facing the Nedic government was its problematic reputation among the population and the powerful and convincing propaganda denouncing it as a group of quislings and traitors. Tomasevich, for instance, cites a 1942 memorandum, 'signed by the entire cabinet,' which pointed out that, 'because the government had been established by the Germans, it appeared to be a German tool. Therefore, the accusations of London and Moscow propaganda that it was a puppet government found credence among some Serbs.'⁷⁰ It was a particularly difficult position for the government to make sense of to the population, given the brutal nature of the occupation regime, the German conduct in Europe as well as the Nazi ideology with its view of Slavs as *Untermenschen*. If any of the government's goals were to be accomplished - most notably, the end to sabotage activities targeting the Nazi apparatus inside the country - it needed to formulate a convincing response to such accusations. This new discourse was also in a direct relationship with the prewar debates on the topic, since essentially the same questions, dilemmas, problems, left unresolved, had to be addressed again. The prewar discourse of Serbia, its national identity and its place in Europe depended to a large extent on the firmness of the East-West dichotomy. With that dichotomy now seriously shaken, novel solutions and combinations appeared.

The stress now was on preserving the purity of national cultural traditions, returning to the 'sources of national spirit' and protecting those from any foreign (i.e. mostly Western) contamination. The discourse of national authenticity now directly referred to the prewar debates on modernization and Westernization, condemning 'the path to Europe' that those had proposed. The interwar calls for imitating the West and casting off national traditions deemed 'Eastern' and therefore worthless - all these core elements of the late 1930s intellectual discussions were now identified as the sources of evil and decay. Instead of developing and honouring their own national ideas, Serbs 'proclaimed them worthless and shameful, even empty phrases.'⁷¹ For Nedic himself, the New Serbia had to have 'roots solely in the national soul and traditional national consciousness.' Minister of Education Jonic also welcomed the new European and global system in which it would be possible for a 'small nation to live and work following its own specific and authentic path and destiny, and at the same time to be universally recognized and respected.' This new politics of authenticity meant that 'building our own Serbian soul, and our own Serbian ideal,' was the chief aim.⁷² The source of the nation's political as well as moral catastrophe was in the fact that 'for twenty years we had been abandoning Serbia', while the Serbian youth 'had been seduced by all those winds and rages, both Western and Eastern.'⁷³

All solutions and answers were already extant within the 'well of the Serbian national soul,' and were accordingly to be found only if the nation remained loyal to its own historical authenticity. It

was recommended that the Serbian nation's cultural work be protected, indeed isolated, from all outside influences and interferences that could harm its authentic development. On the other hand, there were constant references to the need to build and rebuild, to renovate, to progress, better the nation, even modernize, to achieve certain standards. But the very task of modernization was conceptualized as, so to speak, backward-oriented, i.e. it was the *return* of a "de-nationalized" people and culture to their own national "essences" and authentic national character that was to constitute progress ("Serbia's new road on old historical paths"). As law student Slobodan Jankovic wrote in 1942, the Serbian youth needed to go back and 're-read more often its national history and its uncontaminated national past, when great national fighters had lived.'⁷⁴ This rediscovery of what Ljotic termed the 'old imperial path' of Serbia was certain to make the Serbian nation and state "truly modern," and apt for their tasks in the New European Order.⁷⁵ Moreover, the new Serbian homeland would need to be set up on 'healthy peasant foundations, cemented with one common will and inspired with one unique Serbian soul', and it would be thereby reinforced against all pernicious 'artificial creations' such as Western influences. As Nedic confirmed at his meeting with a group of peasant youth before they were sent to Germany on an educational tour 'to get acquainted with German agriculture', the new Serbian state would be called the 'Serbian peasant cooperative state', and would be based exclusively on the organizations and cultural traditions of the revived and renovated Serbian countryside.⁷⁶ Given this rejection of cities, universities, parliaments as degenerate, foreign, morally dirty and contaminated, it was not surprising that New Serbia in the New European Order was to be exceptionally inward-looking yet profoundly European: patriarchal, traditional and at the same time more avidly international and progressive than ever before. This anti-international internationalism was one of the most striking and persistent ideas of the wartime years, and the collaborationist intelligentsia undertook to invent such authentic and nationally 'pure' traditions to fit it.

Such understanding of progress and modernity rejected the linear vision of advancement and civilization, inherent in the prewar Westernization debates: "Patriots' believed in the 'progress of humankind' that unmistakably increases with time, so that every generation must be more 'advanced' than the previous ones... According to them, laws and conviction of national life are not only malleable but one nation needs to 'look up to the advanced,' and not only learn from them how to build roads, railways and canals, but also must imitate their customs, habits, convictions, language, thoughts, faith.' As the only healthy alternative, Ljotic suggested that 'every nation must find its own way, convictions and laws of its own life and hold to them persistently, since without that essence it falls into decay and encounters its own death and destruction.'⁷⁷

Coupled with this, and equally frequently referred to, was the insistence on Serbia's European membership and its international role under the novel circumstances. The importance of this European aspect in the state's cultural and political existence and activities was indeed constructed as an integral part of the Serbian national identity. From the very beginning of the occupation, wartime writings held on to the rhetoric of participation in an exceptionally significant project, one of building the New

European Order. They also constructed Serbia as an important, equal, honourable and respected member of the renovated European family of nations. In fact, as Nedic's Minister Olcan noted in 1943, while England's plans for the postwar reconstruction of Europe relegated the Balkans to the political margins and envisaged an insignificant international position for the region⁷⁸, Serbia under Nedic had been awarded a 'dignified place in the European community', which would, after the war, become a 'family of harmony and happiness.'⁷⁹

Given that now there was a possibility to view Europe as not solely Western, although Serbia was markedly different from the West in its national traditions and authentic historical development, there was no conceptual obstacle any more to claiming that Serbia had already achieved its desired Europeanness. It was asserted that the quality of Serbian ('Eastern- determined') culture, literature and art was equal to those in Western Europe, and many authors even argued that Serbian legacies was superior to creations of some of the most celebrated cultural workers of the Western European tradition. Serbia's nationally authentic accomplishments could now proudly be retained and promoted as a formative element of a diverse and inclusive Europe, whose history consisted of cultural interpéntrations across the East-West divide. It was therefore safe to proclaim Serbia non-civilized (i.e. to 'admit' its non-Westernness) but to nevertheless assert the admirability and preciousness of its culture on a par with Europe, and even superior to (West) Europe's most glorious achievements.

In such an atmosphere, articles abounded which maintained that the Serbian national epic poetry about Marko Kraljevic, a highly mythologized medieval historical figure, actually represented one of the most brilliant and profound expressions of the essence of the Kantian philosophical principles, or that Serbian national legends could be compared in method and excellence to Ibsen's 'most successful heroic dramas.'⁸⁰ Nineteenth-century poet Njegos's work proved to be a most fruitful topic in this regard. It was considered both European and authentically Serbian, original and different from his supposed Western models. To some it was superior: 'Sophocles and Njegos can freely be compared... It is clear from this analysis that Sophocles fails in his heroic action, as he does not fully implement his heroic ethics as a law of absolute sacrifice... Therefore, we can say without exaggeration that, with respect to human sacrifice, Njegos was superior to Sophocles, creating in his lofty though a true heroic imperative. Sophocles could never reach that stage.' Referring also to some German critics' readings of Njegos's literature, the author wrote about the poet as a *European* genius, 'hitherto unsurpassed,' and yet original, fresh, an 'expression of his own racial genius.' Although he was absolutely comparable to minds such as Dante, Milton, Lamartine, Njegos's work was profoundly non-Western, significantly different from these Western writers and intellectuals' achievements. There was nothing about Njegos to suggest imitation or rejection of national traditions. Authentic yet relevant in the European context, Njegos and his 'heroic patriarchy' were the road to Europe. This only meant that the absolute equality between Europe and the West was no more, and it also illustrated quite well the peculiar concept of modernization and 'Europeanization' as a return to the 'authentic' - the traditional, patriarchal, i.e. the profoundly 'unmodern.'⁸¹

In addition, in a number of writings, the Ottoman past was talked about in “normalized” terms of politics and geography rather than culture and civilization. Collaborationist discourses rarely mentioned the Empire’s inherent backwardness, and 'Turkey' and 'Austria' were constructed as entities of essentially similar cultural and political characters (and, hence, legacies). Furthermore, as one author asserted, writing on 'novel aspects' of the history of German-Serbian diplomatic relations, there were no fundamental distinctions between the Ottoman Empire and Bismarck’s Germany either, and no relationship of inferiority-superiority. Serbia was to take its new place 'in the Orient,' 'inheriting and assuming Turkey’s position' in relation to Germany, and this was certainly not seen to contain any negative cultural or civilizational implications.⁸² Ljotic also introduced a rather positive discourse of the Ottoman Empire, a peculiar redemption of its values. He attempted to redefine some aspects of the national mythology to suit his purposes and projected self-image, comparing the Nedic government with the “admirable” and “tragic” state of affairs in the “Serbian lands” following the Kosovo battle and preceding the Ottoman takeover, and consequently, comparing the two “great and powerful” conquerors - the Ottoman Empire and the Third Reich.⁸³

Conclusion

The centrality of the conceptual East-West dichotomy determined the interwar debates regarding possibilities and directions for Serbia’s and Yugoslavia’s modernization. The problem of preserving national authenticity and historical cultural identity while implementing reforms that would bring the state closer to the Western standards proved to be a very difficult one, and it bred multiple frustrations regarding the viability of modernization and progress.

The wartime puppet regime of Milan Nedic continued to address many of the same issues and problems under the radically transformed circumstances. The anti-imperialist rhetoric dictated by the general line of the Nazi propaganda introduced the possibility of viewing the 'East' and non-European, even non-Christian, territories as the bearers of superiority and exceptional cultural/civilizational value. The Serbian press adopted the Nazi discourse on Japan, India, Africa, the Middle East, according to which Western influences and elements were the ones with backward and detrimental consequences. This profoundly reshaped how these wartime journalists and intellectuals wrote about Europe and its cultural legacies and roots. Many authors started to write of the East-West cultural, racial and ethnic interpénétrations as having had an enormous formative influence on the creation of a common European cultural/artistic/civilizational consciousness. It was paradoxical that this discourse of cultural mixing as a valuable and positive asset should emerge under the occupation of a power which placed the imperative of racial purity at the core of its ideology.

Nazism’s ideological anti-Westernness certainly influenced the above-described shifts in the Serbian context. However, a very important aspect of the Third Reich’s European unity rhetoric was

the *ante murale* myth, i.e. the notion that Germany was defending West Europe's civilizational achievements and values from the 'barbarians from the East,' and 'continuing [the] two-thousand-year-old mission of liberating Europe from the Eastern 'nightmare.'¹⁸⁴ In that sense, a unique discourse emerged in wartime Serbia, shaped by the distinctive features of the local Serbian context before and during WWII as well as by the local actors' responses to Nazism's inherent internal contradictions and inconsistencies. This discourse relied on the anti-Orientalist and anti-Western strand in the Nazis' complex and incoherent global vision, and deconstructed the East-West opposition and constructed the image of Europe as culturally (and even geographically) much more inclusive and diverse.

This partly served an urgent propagandistic purpose. But on a different level, the new historical opportunities and intellectual climate offered a true resolution of the interwar conundrums regarding 'backwardness', modernization, Europeanization and national identity. Such a dramatic change in the discourse and value system thus shed new light on the nature and meanings of the WWII Axis internationalism on Europe's periphery and on how it was developed in a society which withstood some of the most brutal and humiliating German policies in occupied Europe. It demonstrated how disappointments with and intellectual inconsistencies and failures of the pre-war liberal international order in the Balkans bred elites who searched for alternative ways of organizing and imagining the international community in the late 1930s and 1940s. In the course of WWII, their search for a more inclusive and less hierarchical internationalism led them to a fraught cooperation with and support for the genocidal realities of the Nazi New Order. They adapted the Nazi rhetoric to their own purposes: relying on certain strands of the Third Reich's anti-Western and anti-Orientalist propaganda, Serbia's collaborationist intellectuals constructed the image of a diverse and non-hierarchical New Europe which provided the Balkans with a unique chance for Europeanization without the obstacles and prejudices of the pre-war order. The New European Order was a lived experience on the margins of Europe, even in the tightly controlled occupied territories: having developed their own intellectual framework within which Serbia belonged to Europe and grew more international precisely by becoming more nationalistic and exclusive, Serbia's leaders insisted on other, more concrete forms of cooperation and exchange with the Third Reich. The experiences of Serbia's collaborationist intellectuals thus show that Hitler's New Europe did appear to function as an alternative institutional setup of the European continent in the eyes of the local puppet governments, and it was often expected to replace and improve the previous European organization. Even in those parts of Europe which were dealt with most brutally, the Nazi project of a New Europe appeared to inspire at least some confidence: as historian Vasa Kazimirovic concluded, Nedic 'believed that he would eventually be able ...to be the leader of an independent Serbia within Hitler's new order in Europe.'¹⁸⁵

The Nazi rhetoric of the New Order offered novel solutions within radically different intellectual and political parameters. Moreover, a young East European society which had faced dire political, economic and intellectual difficulties in the crisis-ridden interwar years saw it not only as an inescapable, violently imposed reality but also as an opportunity to join the European family of nations

without the cultural baggage of 'primitivism' and 'backwardness.' To the Balkan countries struggling to conceptualize and then implement their programmes of 'Europeanization' and modernization, the dramatic changes brought about by the WWII occupation and collaboration might have appeared to open up viable alternative avenues for reaching those international goals and positions that had been unattainable within the crumbling pre-war order, even if their actual experiences of the Third Reich's presence were extremely unlikely to encourage such optimism.

¹ See Christian Axboe Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs: Identity in King Alexander's Yugoslavia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014); Elizabeth Bakke, *Doomed to failure? The Czechoslovak Nation Project and the Slovak Autonomist Reaction, 1918-1939* (Oslo: University of Oslo, 1998); Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation-Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995)

² Patrick Zylberman, 'Mosquitos and the Komitadjis: Malaria and Borders in Macedonia (1919-1938)', Facing illness in troubled times, Iris Borowy and Wolf Gruner, eds (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005); Zeljko Dugac, *Protiv bolesti i neznanja: Rockefellerova fondacija u medjuratnoj Jugoslaviji*, (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2005); Ljubodrag Dimic, *Kulturna politika Kraljevine Jugoslavije* (Belgrade: Stubovi kulture, 1996-7); Latinka Perovic, *Srpsko drustvo na prelazima vekova* (Belgrade: Helsinski odbor za ljudska prava, 2006)

³ On interwar Yugoslavia's foreign policy, see Branislav Gligorijevic, *Kralj Aleksandar Karadjordjevic u evropskoj politici*, (Belgrade: Zavod za udzbenike i nastavna sredstva, 2002); Vuk Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska izmedju dva svetska rata*, (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1985)

⁴ Robert Edwin Herzstein, *When Nazi Dreams Come True: The Third Reich's Internal Struggle over the Future of Europe after a German Victory* (London: Abacus, 1982), 29, 27-38, 69-70

⁵ Alexander Dallin, *German rule in Russia 1941-1945* (London: Macmillan, 1957), 666; on German occupation policies in Eastern Europe, see also Hannes Heer, "Killing Fields: The Wehrmacht and the Holocaust in Belorussia, 1941-1942," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 11: 1 (1997): 86; Martin Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941-44* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan and USHMM, 2003); Jan Gross, *Neighbours: Destruction of the Jewish community in Jedwabne, Poland*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Karel C. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004); Walter Manoschek, 'The extermination of Jews in Serbia', in *National Socialist extermination policies: contemporary German perspectives and controversies*, ed. U. Herbert (Oxford: Berghan Books, 2000); Christopher R. Browning, *Fateful Months: Essays on the Emergence of the Final Solution*, (London: Holmes and Meier, 1985)

⁶ *Ibid.*, 65

⁷ Even mere promises of future political self-rule were resisted until very late in the war, let alone suggestions for creating a puppet government (or governments) made up of local pro-Nazi and nationalist elements. Berlin's refusals to grant concessions 'stemmed from a mental and emotional block that made [Hitler] balk at the thought of accepting Russians and Ukrainians as "allies"', of 'dignifying' them with a rhetoric or policy of partnership with the Great Reich (*ibid.*, 502).

⁸ Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: Occupation and collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 213

⁹ See Herzstein, *When Nazi Dreams Come True*; Michael Salewski, 'National Socialist Ideas on Europe', in *Documents on the History of European Integration, Volume 1, Continental Plans for European Union 1939-1945*, ed. Walter Lipgens (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), 37-178; Elizabeth Harvey, 'International Networks and Cross-Border Cooperation: National Socialist Women and the Vision of a 'New Order' in Europe', *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 13 (2012): 141-58; Holly Case, *Between states: The Transylvanian question and the European idea during WWII*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009); Benjamin George Martin, "'European Literature' in the Nazi New Order: The Cultural Politics of the European Writer's Union, 1942-3", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48 (2013): 486-508.

⁹ Yves Durand, "Collaboration French-style: A European perspective," in *France at war: Vichy and the historians*, eds Fishman, Sarah, Laura Lee Downs, Ioannis Sinanoglou, Leonard V. Smith and Robert Zaretsky (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2000), 67

¹¹ see Todor Stojkov, *Vlada Milana Stoiadinovica (1935-1937)* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1985); J. B. Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in crisis. 1934-1941* (Columbia University Press: New York and London, 1962), 22-61, 136-170; Ljubodrag Dimic, *Kulturna politika Kraljevine Jugoslavije*, 329-387

¹² Predrag Palavestra, 'Srpski književni glasnik i srpska građanska misao', *Književnost*, 7/9, (2002):598

¹³ Ranko Mladenovic, 'Pod nasim trouglom', *XX vek*, 1, (1938): 1-3

¹⁴ Marko Nedic and Vesna Matovic, eds, *Nova Evropa 1920-1941: Zbornik radova*, (Belgrade: Institut za književnost i umetnost, 2010), 458

¹⁵ Milan Curcin, 'Velika Britanija i Nova Evropa', *Nova Evropa*, XXI:2, 16 February 1930, 73

¹⁶ Ibid., 'Nas savez sa Francuskom', *Nova Evropa*, XVII:4, 26 February 1928, 101-104

¹⁷ Wachtel, 112-113, 125

¹⁸ Wachtel, 123-124

¹⁹ B.B. Todorovic, 'Odluke bugarske likovne umetnosti', *XX vek*, 6, (1938):144-147

²⁰ M. Svetovski, 'Po prahu istorije', *XX vek*, 1, 1938:128

²¹ Other contributors to this discussion also wrote frequently about the 'brutal and inhuman rule of the Turks' over the Balkan Christians, and viewed the Ottoman cultural influence as profoundly unproductive and degenerative, since the 'Turks... checked the general development of the people and left them, up to the present day, in that state of cultural development which they had achieved during the middle ages' (Dusan Pantelic, 'Bishop Strossmayer,' *Anglo-Yugoslav Review*, 5-6, (1937):52).

²² Stanislav Vinaver, 'Pokušaj ritmičkog proučavanja muškog deseterca', (Belgrade: Prilozi proučavanju narodne poezije, knj. 1, 1940), 194-244

²³ Ibid., 95

²⁴ Ibid., 96

²⁵ Grbic, 97

²⁶ Branimir Males, 'Osnovi biogeneze i biodinamike dinarske rase', *Socijalno-medicinski pregled*, 1 (1940)

²⁷ Males, 'Rase kojima pripadaju Srbi i Hrvati', *Socijalno-medicinski pregled*, 4, (1937)

²⁸ *Sveznanje: Opšti enciklopediski leksikon*, Beograd, 1937

²⁹ Olivera Milosavljevic, *Savremenici fasizma 2: Jugoslavija u okruženju, 1933-1941*, Belgrade: Helsinski odbor za ljudska prava, 2010, 47-48

³⁰ S. Stefanovic, 'Zapadno-evropski čovek – arijevske rase postoji', *Vreme*, 25. avgust 1934

³¹ And while, regardless of whether they were constructed as "essentially" Western or Eastern, the Balkans were viewed as by all means capable of eventually joining the European family of nations, the non-European territories, such as Africa and Asia, were denied that ability - they were fundamentally different, and incorrigibly so. In another article, Males analyzed 'the yellow danger' and its implications on supposedly scientific racial-biological grounds which, quite predictably, spelled the unchangeable inferiority of the non-

Europeans and non-whites. Males warned that they could pose a true danger to the 'advanced' precisely if they dared embark on a Westernization or modernization project, such as the Japanese militarization campaign or the 'intellectualization' of the 'Negroid' elements living in North Africa or in Spain and France. (Branimir Males, 'Zuta opasnost kao demografska pojava,' *XX vek*, 2, (1938):63-67)

³² Esther Levinger, 'Ljubomir Micic and the Zenithist utopia', in *Exchange and transformations, 1910-1930* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 273

³³ See Irina Subotic, 'Avant-garde tendencies in Yugoslavia', *Art Journal*, 49:1, (1990):21-27; Misko Suvakovic, 'Belgrade', in *Central European avant-gardes*, ed. Timothy O. Benson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 276-282

³⁴ Rade Drainac, 'Program Hipniza', *Hipnos*, 1, (1922):2-3

³⁵ Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974); on Ljotic and Zbor, see also Jovan Byford, 'Willing Bystanders: Dimitrije Ljotić, "Shield Collaboration" and the Destruction of Serbia's Jews', in Rebecca Haynes and Martyn Rady, *In the Shadow of Hitler: Personalities of the Right in Central and Eastern Europe*, (London: I.B.Tauris, 2011); Mladen Stefanovic, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotica*, (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1984)

³⁶ See Zoran Milutinovic, *Getting over Europe: The construction of Europe in Serbian culture*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 147-180

³⁷ On the Balkan Institute, see Ivan Obradovic, 'Balkanski Institut, 1934-1941', *Godisnjak za drustvenu istoriju*, 3, (2010):43-62

³⁸ See Dragan Subotic, *Balkanske teme Ratka Parezanina*, Belgrade: 2001

³⁹ Svetozar Spanacevic, *Balkan i Balkanci [The Balkans and the Balkanians]* (Belgrade: Balkan Institute, 1937)

⁴⁰ Spanacevic, 'The real Balkans and an old misconception', *XX vek*, 4, (1937):34

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Vladimir Velmar-Jankovic, *Pogled sa Kalemegdana: Ogled o beogradskom coveku* (Belgrade: Gregoric, 1938)

⁴³ Milosavljevic, *Potisnuta istina*, 181

⁴⁴ Danilo Gregorić, 'Smrt liberalne države', *Otadžbina*, 22 March 1936

⁴⁵ Velibor Jonić, 'Nova komunistička taktika', *Otadžbina*, 3 November 1935

⁴⁶ Dr Božidar Nikolajević, 'Pouke iz nemačkog nacionalizma', II, *Narodna odbrana*, 17 May 1936; *ibid.*, 'Problem seljaštva kod nas i u Nemačkoj', *Narodna odbrana*, 28 June 1936

⁴⁷ Quoted in Milosavljevic, *Potisnuta istina*, 178-179

⁴⁸ Danilo Gregoric, *Samoubistvo Jugoslavije, poslednji cin jugoslovenske tragedije*, Belgrade: 1942

⁴⁹ Tomasevich, 179

⁵⁰ Tomasevich, 217. On Nedic's government, see also Milan Borkovic, *Milan Nedic* (Zagreb, 1985); Milan Borkovic, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji. Kvislinska uprava 1941-1944* (Belgrade: Sloboda, 1979); Vasa Kazimirovic, *Srbija i Jugoslavija 1941-1945. IV*, (Kragujevac, 1995)

⁵¹ In addition, this radical transformation of Belgrade's dominant discourse on Britain (coupled, for the same reasons, with a continuation of the strong anti-Bolshevik rhetoric) had another, domestic political rationale. Namely, at least initially, the government's central aim was to conduct a successful military and propagandistic campaign against the royalist Chetnik movement as long as its leadership engaged in anti-German operations. The British government was rightly identified as the main source of political and military support for the Chetniks.

⁵² 'Bes razaranja', *Srpski Narod*, 20, (1944): 2; Milan Nedic, 'Anglo-amerikanski krvavi darovi', *Srpski Narod*, 19, (1944):1; 'Dve Engleske', *Srpski Narod*, 8, (1944):1-2

⁵³ 'Vojni i ideoloski slom Staljinovog rezima,' *Srpski Narod*, 4, (1942):3; 'Srpska vlada narodnog spasa dize glas protivu neprijatelja civilizacije', *Obnova*, 18 December 1943; 'Cime nas kljukaju London, Boston i Moskva?', *Srpski Narod*, 3, (1942):5

⁵⁴ 'Završen je kongres evropskih pretstavnika u Vajmaru', *Obnova*, 14 December 1943

⁵⁵ Zivojin Rankovic, 'Odgovornost Engleske i SAD za drugi svetski rat', *Srpski Narod*, 3, (1942):5; Bogoljub Kujundzic, 'Misija Srbije u novom politickom i privrednom sistemu Evrope', *Srpski Narod*, 4, (1942):1-2

⁵⁶ 'Srpska se krv lije u Africi,' *Srpski Narod*, 4, (1942):2-3;

⁵⁷ 'Evropa u znaku slova V', *Novo Vreme*, 22 July 1941

⁵⁸ 'Victoria - ratni poklic Evrope', *Novo Vreme*, 23 July 1941; see also 'Dobrovoljci Evrope', *Kolo*, 15 January 1944

⁵⁹ 'O zemlji Izlazeceg Sunca', *Srpski Narod*, 3, (1942):15

⁶⁰ 'Stvaranje novog sveta reda i pravde', *Novo Vreme*, 2 January 1942

⁶¹ Olivera Milosavljevic, *Potisnuta istina: Kolaboracija u Srbiji, 1941-1944* (Belgrade: Helsinski odbor, 2006), 32

- ⁶² 'Indija, zemlja nebrojenih rasa, naroda i religija', *Srpski Narod*, 12, (1942):6
- ⁶³ 'Pravo lice Indije', *Srpski Narod*, 11, (1942):15
- ⁶⁴ 'Indija, zemlja nebrojenih rasa, naroda i religija', 7
- ⁶⁵ Similarly, an article on the military operations and clashes in the Middle East emphasized that this region was not different from Europe in any essential way. Its nations and states belonged to the same (previously uniquely European) family of cultured and civilized peoples, especially after having been liberated from the hitherto predominant backward-looking Western influences. Moreover, in addition to Europe now being defined in more inclusive and non-dichotomous terms culturally, this author seemed to attempt to extend its borders not only symbolically but also physically. Namely, after the region was reconstructed on novel political foundations, the New European Order introduced and headed by Hitler's Germany would encompass the Middle East as one of its crucial elements ('Radja se evropska solidarnost', *Srpski Narod*, 7, (1942):2).
- ⁶⁶ 'Buducnost malih naroda i njihov znacaj u Novoj Evropi', *Srpski Narod*, 1, (1944):4
- ⁶⁷ Svetislav Stefanovic, 'Sa zapadno-evropskom revolucijom - nas jedini put', *Novo Vreme*, 14 July 1941
- ⁶⁸ 'Kavkaz, zemlja u kojoj se govori sto jezika', *Srpski Narod*, 11, (1942):6. On the Third Reich's crude but consistent anti-Orientalist line, see David Motadel, *Islam and Nazi Germany's War*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014). In a similar vein, wartime discourse of Bolshevism in Belgrade focused much less on the purported civilizational clash between the East and the West. Rather, many writings now portrayed only the political aspect of the Bolshevik system as despicable and harmful, while Russia was often portrayed as an enslaved and suffering nation, an equal and honourable member of the European cultural community and a state whose culture participated in the historical creation and development of European civilization. Germany's assault on the Soviet Union and its 'holy war' against Bolshevism finally made it possible to liberate the Russian people from the fetters of Communism, but it also led to a full-blown spiritual rebirth of all other European nations. As a consequence, Russian civilization would now at last be able to join this renovated European family and complete 'the historical metamorphosis' of the continent, which was to be based on the 'solid partnership of all European peoples' ('Preobrazaj Evrope', *Novo Vreme*, 23 July 1941).
- ⁶⁹ 'Zajednica evropske umetnosti', *Srpski Narod*, 24, (1944):8-9
- ⁷⁰ Tomasevich, 210. 'The government is made responsible by the people for all the difficulties of everyday life: food and fuel shortages, requisitioning, Bulgarian occupation, punitive expeditions and the like' - at the same time, the populace could see no important benefit coming from it that would justify its existence.'
- ⁷¹ Kujundzic, 'Misija Srbije', 1; Milan Nedic, 'Priznanje u ime Otadzbine srpskoj omladini sela i grada', *Srpski Narod*, 4, (1942):1
- ⁷² 'Za duhovno jedinstvo', *Srpski Narod*, 2, (1942):2
- ⁷³ Vladimir Velmar-Jankovic, 'Pismo zarobljenim Srbima', *Novo Vreme*, 7 Janury 1942
- ⁷⁴ Slobodan M. Jankovic, 'Nova srpska omladina', *Novo Vreme*, 7 January 1942
- ⁷⁵ Dimitrije Ljotic, 'Carski put i stranputica', *Nasa Borba*, 26 November 1941
- ⁷⁶ 'Preporodjeno selo bice temelj nove drzave i nove Srbije', *Srpsko selo*, 5 June 1943
- ⁷⁷ Ljotic, 'Dijalog 'rodoljuba' i 'izdajice'', *Nasa Borba*, 17 May 1942
- ⁷⁸ 'Ministar Olcan o sudbinskoj povezanosti nasoj sa Evropom', *Obnova*, 20 September 1943; 'Balkanska razmatranja', *Zapisi*, January-April 1944
- ⁷⁹ E. Mesner, 'Pobeda generala Nedica', *Obnova*, 21 September 1943
- ⁸⁰ Dr S. Ristic, 'Problem coveka kod Kanta i u srpskom narodnom pesnistvu.' *Srpski Narod*, 1, (1942):14; 27, (1944):7
- ⁸¹ 'Sofokle i Njegosev herojski imperativ', *Srpski Narod*, 27, (1944):7
- ⁸² 'Misljenje srpskih politicara o nemacko-srpskim odnosima u vreme kneza Bizmarka', *Srpski Narod*, 2, (1942):8
- ⁸³ Ljotic, 'Nedic i neko drugi', *Nasa Borba*, 26 April 1942.
- ⁸⁴ Dallin, 67
- ⁸⁵ Kazimirovic, 1123