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УДК 325.254(=861)(495)''1916/1918''

## The Serbs in Greece: The Serbian exile in Greece during the First World War

*Айспиракѝ: На основу докуменѝа грчке, српске и бриѝанске ѝровенијенѝије, као и разноврсне лиѝератууре, у овом ѝрилогу ауѝор је ѝружио сложену слику сѝања у коме су се нашле српске избеѝлице у Грчкој између 1916. и 1918. године. Поред избеѝличкоѝ ѝроблема коју је ѝребало решаваѝи на нивоу односа српске, грчке и савезничких влада, ѝосебна ѝажња је ѝосвећена инѝеракѝији избеѝлица са новом, грчком средином, која није била ни једнообразна ни једносѝавна.*

During the First World War, Europe experienced, perhaps for the first time in recent history, mass movements of populations fleeing the front lines or advancing enemy troops. The case of Serbia is typical: of the country's 4.5 million or so inhabitants (1914), 5% were forced into exile to avoid capture or atrocities. The vast majority found refuge in Greece, where they remained until the end of the war.

Since June 1913 Greece and Serbia had been linked by a military alliance that had brought the two countries success in the Second Balkan War and in the subsequent Treaty of Bucharest, which established their sovereignty over the newly acquired territories in Macedonia. With the outbreak of the First World War, however, this relationship changed. The pro-German Greek king, Constantine, supported by a section of the country's political and military elite, objected to Greece's going to Serbia's aid, as this would mean entering the European confrontation on the side of the Entente. The Prime minister, Eleftherios Venizelos, on the other hand, who represented the liberal bourgeois class, favoured entry into the war and military assistance for Serbia. Thus, when in October 1915 the Serbian government asked Greece to intervene against the imminent Austro-Hungarian, German and Bulgarian assault, the king forced Venizelos to resign and turned down the Serbian request on the grounds that the 1913 treaty covered regional conflicts only, and not a European-wide war<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> For Greek-Serbian relations during the First World War, see M. Милошевић, *Србија и Грчка, 1914–1918. Из историје дипломатѝких односа* (Serbia and Greece 1914–1918. From the history of diplomatic relations), Београд, Зајечар, 1997, and L. Hassiotis, *Pente chronia diplomatikon dilimmaton: Oi ellinoservikes scheseis, 1913–1918* (Five years of diplomatic dilemmas: Greek-Serbian relations, 1913–1918), Ph. D. thesis, Thessaloniki, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 1998.

Greek inertia and delays in sending the Allied troops to Thessaloniki led inevitably to the collapse of the Serbian Front in late October 1915. The Serbian army, together with almost the entire political and military leadership, was forced to retreat, first (November-December 1915) towards Albania and then (early January 1916) to Corfu. There are Allies undertook to reorganise the army, and a few months later managed to move the greater part – around 100,000 men – to Greek Macedonia. The Serbian army regrouped and subsequently took part in operations on the Macedonian Front until the end of the war<sup>2</sup>.

All this well known and needs no discussion here. What must be stressed, however, is that the few available sources suggest that the Serbs' brief sojourn on Corfu did not greatly disrupt the life of the island's inhabitants. Despite the rise in epidemics and sickness in the Serbian camps in early 1916, relations between the refugees and the Corfiotes were not strained. In contrast, relations between the local authorities and the Allied forces, especially the Italians, were much less harmonious; indeed they not infrequently led to tension, friction and even clashes between Greek and Allied soldiers<sup>3</sup>.

The Serbian army and the political and military leadership were not alone in seeking refuge in Greek territory; they were followed by thousands of non-combatants who preferred exile to life under occupation. Some of these accompanied the Serbian army in its retreat through Albania. Their march to the Adriatic coast during the bitter winter of 1916, later known as the „Albanian Calvary”, was one of the most tragic chapters in modern Serbian history: tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians, utterly unprepared for such a journey, perished in the snow on the harsh Albanian mountains<sup>4</sup>.

In contrast, the retreat was easier for those who managed to cross the Greek-Serbian border, at first (late November-early December 1915) into Greek Western Macedonia and then Thessaloniki, but also further south<sup>5</sup>. The settlement of the refugees in Hellenic territory was of course painless neither for them nor for the locals and the Greek authorities. Yet it brought the two peoples together in a way that no initiatives by the two governments could have done, and in its own way influenced relations between them.

The flow of Serbian refugees into Greece through Albania and Greek Western Macedonia had begun a few months before the collapse of the Serbian Front. At first they were mostly Serbian army draft-evaders and deserters from the Macedonian provinces of Serbia. Indeed, the Serbian government accused the

<sup>2</sup> For the Allied occupation of Corfu, see A. Tounda-Fergadi, „The Serbian Troops on Corfu: The Problem of Transporting them to Thessaloniki and Greek Public Opinion on the Affair”, *Proceedings of the 5th Greek-Serbian Symposium: Serbia and Greece during the First World War*, Thessaloniki, Institute for Balkan Studies, 1991, 30–33.

<sup>3</sup> Hassiotis, *ibid.*, 162–172.

<sup>4</sup> D. Đorđević, *History of Serbia, 1800–1918*, transl. N. Paparrodou, Thessaloniki, Institute for Balkan Studies, 1970, 401–402, where mention is made of another 5,000 who died from hardship in Corfu.

Greek consular authorities in Skopje of providing these deserters, and especially those from the long-established Greek communities of Northern Macedonia, with Greek passports in order to facilitate their passage to Greece<sup>6</sup>. However, among these refugees were Albanians, Turks, Bulgarians and other Macedonians, who had no the least desire to fight for Serbia.

The settlement of these first refugees in Greek territory provoked a backlash by the authorities and the press, who feared that their presence would threaten public order and worsen relations between Athens and Belgrade. The reaction of the press and the local community was typical of the way refugees and immigrants had always been treated. The Greek newspapers wrote that the presence of the refugees in Greek Macedonia, „which has need of security”, was dangerous because it would increase the number „of the jobless and beggars”. At the same time there was Bulgarian interference, as in the case of Netkov, the Bulgarian Consul in Thessaloniki, who asked that Serbian army deserters be allowed to relocate to his country, hoping in this way to have them recorded as Bulgarians<sup>7</sup>.

The main body of the refugees who fled to Greece left Serbia after the Bulgarian assault, and especially after the government and army left the country. On 20 October 1915, just one week after Bulgaria declared war on Serbia, the Greek Consul at Bitola (Monastir), I. Iosif, informed Athens that many refugees had arrived in the town intending to cross into Greece, and that they would be accompanied by consular officials to ensure good order. Also at this time most Serbian government officials sent their families to Greece to save them from the war and the Bulgarian irregulars<sup>8</sup>.

The Greek government was of course unprepared for such an influx. It already had enough on its hands in accommodating the Greeks who had fled Bulgaria and Turkey at the time of the Balkan Wars and the beginning of the Turkish persecutions in Eastern Thrace and Anatolia. Athens, deeply concerned about the – real – risk of epidemics, and also about public order in Greek Macedonia, notified the Serbian leadership that it should direct its nationals towards other countries. Similar notes were sent to the governments of France and Great Britain<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Hassiotis, *ibid.*, 152–153.

<sup>6</sup> Archeion Ypourgeiou Exoterikon (Greek Foreign Ministry Archives, henceforth: AYE)/1915 A/1, 5, 19: Serbian deserters, Corfu 9.8.1915, I. Alexandropoulos to the Foreign Ministry; Thessaloniki, 25.8.1915, Thessaloniki Police Headquarters to the Macedonia Gendarmerie headquarters.

<sup>7</sup> AYE/1915 A/1, 5, 19: Serbian deserters, Thessaloniki, 30.8.1915.

<sup>8</sup> AYE/1915 A/5 (25): The position and conduct of Serbia and Montenegro during the World War, Monastir, 6.10.1915, Iosif to Foreign Ministry; AYE/1916 A/5/1 4: Collapse of Serbia and Montenegro in the second year of the war, Monastir, 31.12.1915, Iosif to Foreign Ministry: Dispatch of the request by the ex-prefect of Monastir that asylum be granted by the Greek government to 150 families of Serbian civil servants and gendarmes.

<sup>9</sup> AYE/1915 A/5 (25): The position and conduct of Serbia and Montenegro in the World War, Athens, 16.10.1915, Foreign Ministry to Alexandropoulos, and Public Record Office/Foreign Office (henceforth: FO) 371/2273/1915 Balkans (War), Athens, 13.10.1915, From Elliot to Ed. Grey.

The Serbian refugees, however, had no alternative, especially those who had fled first to Serbian and then to Greek Macedonia. Greece soon accepted this fact, although there were objections – justifiable or not – mostly from representatives of local authorities<sup>10</sup>.

In early December 1915 a special committee met in Thessaloniki to consider the Serbian refugee question. Present were the Consul Generals of Serbia and Russia, Sir E. Boyle, representing the British government, the Prefect of Thessaloniki prefecture, the Thessaloniki police chief and, from the Serbian side, the mayor of Bitola and the dean of the School of Law at Belgrade University. The Serbian representatives requested that buildings be requisitioned to house the refugees, the owners be immediately compensated by the committee and the refugees be permitted to settle in the port of Volos. According to the Serbian and Russian consular authorities, around 20,000 refugees had already arrived in Greece, and their number was growing daily<sup>11</sup>. The Allied governments pledged to accept a small number of refugees, but the bulk were to remain in Greece<sup>12</sup>. The British government agreed to move 1,000 Serbian farmers to Cyprus, so that it could show itself as humanitarian and at the same time develop the island's agricultural potential<sup>13</sup>.

The exact number of Serbian nationals who took refuge in Greece during the First World War is not known. It can, however, be roughly estimated at 200,000 persons, most of them soldiers. Serbian sources mention that at least 80,000 passed through the Thessaloniki reception camp alone. Other camps existed around the city (at Sedes spa and at Mikra) and in Florina, Edessa and Kastoria<sup>14</sup>. Other places where Serbian refugees stayed briefly or for longer periods were Volos, Athens and of course Corfu, which was also the seat of the Serbian government throughout the war<sup>15</sup>. A few sick and wounded Serbs were accommodated on the Aegean islands<sup>16</sup>. Neverthe-

<sup>10</sup> AYE/1915 A/4: The Balkan Front, Thessaloniki, 7.12.1915, Third Army Corps (signed by General Moschopoulos) to the Foreign Ministry.

<sup>11</sup> AYE/1915 A/5,6, 19: Miscellaneous: Assistance to Serbia, Thessaloniki, 28.11.1915, Director of Prefecture Daralexis to Foreign Ministry and Interior Ministry.

<sup>12</sup> Arhiv Srbije (henceforth: A. S.) /MID-PO/1916, f. VIII, d. 6, Brindisi, 15.1.1916, D. Trujić to N. Pašić. Cf. Milošević, *ibid.*, 199 et seq.

<sup>13</sup> FO 371/2282/1915 Balkans (War), Athens, 14.12.1915, Elliot to FO; London, 24.12.1915, FO to Elliot: „Cyprus can temporarily accommodate 1,000 Serbs of the peasant class”. A few refugees were moved to Britain, France and Italy. On the difficulties faced by the refugees in Romania, cf. A.C./MID-PO/1916, f. VII, d. 5, Bucharest, 15.6.1916, Marinković to Serbian Foreign Ministry (Corfu).

<sup>14</sup> Влад. Миросављевић, „Деловање српског избегличког логора у Солуну током 1919. године” (Activity in the Serbian refugee camp in Thessaloniki in 1919), *Зборник радова*, 8 (1990), 113–114.

<sup>15</sup> A.S./MID-PO/1916, f. VII, d. 5, Athens, 3.2.1916, Serbian Interior Minister to Serbian Foreign Ministry (Corfu).

<sup>16</sup> Ministère des Affaires Étrangères (henceforth: AMAE) / G 1914-18/Balkans, Serbie/382, Paris, 17.11.1916, Ministry of the Navy to A. Briand.

less, Thessaloniki was the centre of medical care for Serbian soldiers from the summer of 1916 onwards<sup>17</sup>.

When the Serbs withdrew to Greece, so did part of the machinery of government: government officials, members of Parliament, senior and junior civil servants, public funds and state records. Due to the difficult conditions under which this transfer was effected, and also to the anomalous situation in Greece at the time, the various arms of government found themselves separated from each other. Thus, while the Serbian cabinet remained on Corfu, the army high command together with Crown Prince Alexander settled in Thessaloniki. Serbian government officials were scattered all over Greece, and also abroad, especially in France and Italy. In 1917 the Serbian government tried to bring all the government and military staffs together in Thessaloniki or some other town, but without success<sup>18</sup>. The attempt to set up the government in Bitola after it had been retaken by the Allies also failed, as the town remained on the front line right up to the surrender of Bulgaria on 17/30 September 1918<sup>19</sup>.

One very interesting chapter in the story of the Serbian sojourn in Greece in 1915–1918 concerns Serbian educational activity. After the collapse of the front, large numbers of children were evacuated to Allied countries, mainly France and Britain, but also to neutral such as Switzerland. The first official record concerning the education of these children comes from France. On 26 November 1915 the French National Assembly passed a resolution by which it undertook to house, feed and educate 500 Serbian schoolchildren. This number soon rose, as most of the evacuated schoolchildren were sent to France. By March of the following year, 1,148 Serbian schoolchildren were studying in French schools. Great Britain also accepted schoolchildren. Indeed, France's insistence on keeping all the Serbian schoolchildren for herself, doubtless hoping in this way to ensure that French influence would predominate in Serbia after the war, led to a diplomatic incident between the two Powers, which was resolved on 26 March 1916 when the Serbian government promised that some of the children would be sent to Britain. In addition, by the end of 1917, 308 young Serbs had settled in Switzerland, and a smaller number had been evacuated to Russia during the withdrawal of certain Serbian units and groups into Romania in late 1915<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Service Historique des Armées de Terre (henceforth: SHAT) / 5 N 191, Cabinet de ministre: Salonique: Thessaloniki 1.1.1917, „St. Louis” to Ministry of the Navy: Wounded and sick in Thessaloniki hospital: 13,262 French, 4,440 Serbs, 1,055 Russians. Also transfer of another 3,500 French and Russians and 1,100 Serbs; Thessaloniki, 28.2.1917, „Charlemagne” to Ministry of the Navy: 3,430 sick and 982 wounded French soldiers, 806 Russian and 2,610 Serbs in Thessaloniki hospitals.

<sup>18</sup> SHAT/5 N 146, Cabinet du ministre, Corfu, 11.10.1916: A. Boppe to French Foreign Ministry and AYE/1917 A/5 VIII: The collapse of Serbia and Montenegro in the third year of the War (23/1-26/12-1917), Paris, 26.6.1917, A. Romanos to Greek Foreign Ministry.

<sup>19</sup> AMAE/G 1914-18/Balkans, Serbia/383, Corfu, 11.12.1916, Boppe to Briand: cf. also AMAE/G 1914-18/Balkans, Serbie/397, Thessaloniki, 25.4.1917, French Consul General to Ribot.

<sup>20</sup> Трговчевић, Љ., „Школовање српске омладине у емиграцији 1916–1918” (The education of Serbian youth during the 1916–1918 emigration), *Историјски часопис*, 42–43 (1995–1996) 1–544, 147–167.

In Greece, schools functioned in many of the Serbian refugee communities<sup>21</sup>. On 6 April 1916 a Serbian school opened its doors in Thessaloniki, and by the end of the year it had 138 pupils. There was also an orphanage at Faliro. The Serbian high school at Bitola moved to Volos, and in 1917 had around 300 pupils. Another Serbian high school operated on Corfu. It has been estimated that in late 1917 about 800 Serbian pupils were participating in Serbian educational activities in Greece. These activities sometimes included propaganda aimed at challenging Greek sovereignty in Greek Macedonia. In quite a few cases Serbian military commanders obstructed the operation of Greek schools or closed them and replaced them with Serbian. This propaganda was mostly directed at the Slav populations of certain areas that these commanders wished to secure as Serbian<sup>22</sup>.

We have little information on the cultural activities of the Serbian refugees in Greece<sup>23</sup>. The presence, however, of Serbian troops on the Macedonian Front from the middle of 1916 obliged their leadership to seek ways to boost troop morale and carry out nationalist propaganda. Thus, from the summer of 1916 onwards they began to organise concerts with various Serbian orchestras, and from 1917 theatrical troupes of Serbian soldiers (former actors and amateurs) put on performances in the Serbian army camps. An army theatre was set up at Mikra and another at Zeitinlik. The pioneers in this field came from the Serbian Vardar Division; the plays its theatre company put on were smash hits with the Serbian troops, and were also much appreciated by the French and British soldiers. Of the pre-war Serbian troupes, mention is made of „*Toša Jovanović*”. This troupe, which before the war had performed in Bitola, played in Thessaloniki (at the „Odeon” theatre), at Mikra and at Zeitinlik. In August 1917 they moved to Edessa, where they apparently began propaganda with the aim of winning over the local Slav Macedonians, as evidenced by the protests of the Greek authorities<sup>24</sup>.

Serbian propaganda in Edessa and other parts of Greek Macedonia will not concern us here, except where it touches on the role of the Serbian refugees. The Serbian ambassador to Greece, on receiving the Greek protest about the propa-

<sup>21</sup> A.S./MID-PO/1916, f. 7, d. 4, Thessaloniki, 16.8.1916, R. Vintrović to the Serbian Interior Ministry.

<sup>22</sup> Hassiotis, *ibid.*, 309–310 and Trgovčević, *ibid.*, 154.

<sup>23</sup> For some of the publications of Serbian literary works in Corfu, and Greek translations of such works during the Serbian presence in Greece, see Miodrag Stojanović, „Les liens littéraires entre les Serbes et les Grecs dans les années de la Première Guerre Mondiale”, *Proceedings of the 5th Greek-Serbian Symposium*, Thessaloniki, IMXA, 1991, 59–67. On the activities of Serbian painters in Corfu and especially in Thessaloniki during the war, see Vera Ristić, „Serbische Mäler in Thessaloniki, 1915–1918”, *ibid.*, 99–111.

<sup>24</sup> Dragoslav Antonijević, „Theatrical Life on the Solonika Front”, *Proceedings of the 5th Greek-Serbian Symposium*, 69–97.

ganda being carried out in the Vodena (Edessa) district, attributed it to „chauvinism” on the part of the refugees. He assured Athens that the Serbian government not only had no involvement in these activities, but was also prepared to take measures against them. He further asked the Greek government to choose a location in Thessaly or some other part of the country, outside Macedonia, to which the Serbs in Edessa could be moved<sup>25</sup>. In addition, the continuing anti-Greek activities of the Serbian refugees in Western Macedonia obliged the „General Governor” of Kozani-Florina, I. G. Iliakis, to request that the Greek government remove them from Macedonia and close their schools in the area<sup>26</sup>.

Naturally, the Serbian refugees were not solely to blame for their problems with the Greek authorities. They frequently met with hostility and rage from the local population, and also overt attacks by state agencies and „parastate” organisations. Their involvement in the crisis of the Greek „National Schism”, due mainly to Serbia having joined the Allied camp, became more apparent after the violence in the Greek capital on 1–2 December (n.s.) 1916 immediately after the departure of the French and British marines from Athens and Piraeus. Greek soldiers and reservists attacked members of the small Serbian community in Athens. Two were murdered and several others imprisoned<sup>27</sup>. This incident was denounced soon after from London by Professor Pavle Popović of Belgrade University: „We shall never forget the terror and anguish of those days. The Greek political and military authorities treated us Serbs as though we were their worst enemies... They held the Serbs responsible for the Allied landings... As soon as the outrages began in the streets, many Serbs were arrested... Most of them were old people..., some members of parliament and businessmen..., quite a few women were attacked, insulted and humiliated by reservists...”<sup>28</sup>.

This ill-treatment of the Serbian refugees was however due not only to their political choices (e.g. propagandising on Hellenic soil) or their involuntary involvement in the Greek crisis. It was also frequently part of their daily experience of life in Greece, a foreign land for them, where they were often treated with the mistrust and contempt reserved for non-Westerns. We cannot of course speak of outbursts of racism or xenophobia by the Greek people or authorities, as we do not have sufficient evidence for this<sup>29</sup>. Nonetheless, there is mentioned

<sup>25</sup> AYE/1917 A/5 VIII: The collapse of Serbia and Montenegro in the third year of the War (23/1-26/12-1917), Athens, 19.7.1917, Unsigned Foreign Ministry memorandum.

<sup>26</sup> AYE/1918 A/5-A/5 VIII: The Karatzova question, Kozani, 2.6.1918, Iiakis to the Foreign Ministry.

<sup>27</sup> FO 371/2623/1916 Balkans (War), Corfu, 14.12.1916, The British Mission to the Serbian Government to the FO.

<sup>28</sup> FO 371/2870/1917 Balkans (War), London, 11.1.1917, Press cuttings: „Ill-treatment of the Serbs in Athens”.

<sup>29</sup> Article in the republican newspaper *Rizospastis*, year 1, no. 2, Thessaloniki, 15.6.1916, titled „The Serbs”. The article notes that many Greeks are displeased at the presence of the Serbian refugees in

of a number of cases of unjustifiable violence against Serbian refugees; these incidents hint at a general, vague atmosphere of hostility towards foreigners, which could find parallels today. Dispatches from the Serbian consulate in Thessaloniki report several such incidents: disputes between local tradesmen and refugees from Bitola, ill-treatment of Serbs by the Greek gendarmerie, etc. The Serbian consulate protested several times about the attitude of the Greek police authorities and called for action not only by the Prefecture but also by the French military command<sup>30</sup>.

The Serbian refugees began to leave Greece immediately after the Bulgarian surrender and the Allied victory on the Macedonian Front. By October 1918 the Serbian authorities in Florina prefecture had been moved back to Serbia<sup>31</sup>. Nevertheless, the refugee camps in Greece, which were supervised by the Serbian Ministry of the Interior, stayed open until the end of 1919. The repatriation was not without difficulties, however, as many refugees were reluctant to return to Serbia. These were mostly inhabitants of Bitola, Gevgelija and Doiran who were of Greek extraction. Many of these people had already found work in Thessaloniki and other towns, and had decided to settle permanently in Greece. The Serbian authorities were also concerned about the many Bosnian Muslims and Turks of Serbian Macedonia among the refugees, fearing that if these people returned to Serbia they could later be claimed by Turkey as her citizens. They were also worried about the presence among the refugees of many „Muslim activists”, who might create problems in Kosovo and Serbian Macedonia during the Peace Conference. Despite these facts, the withdrawal went ahead, and was completed after the Serbian treaty with Italy concerning Dalmatia and Rijeka. The Thessaloniki refugee camp finally closed in early 1920<sup>32</sup>.

Thus ended the story of the Serbian refugees in Greece, one of the first mass settlements of foreigners in another country in modern Balkan history. It should be noted, however, that some Serbs and Montenegrins decided to settle permanently in Greece at the end of the war for financial or personal reasons. Unfortunately, for these cases we have only a few, fragmentary oral accounts from these people’s descendants, insufficient to provide a clear picture of this aspect of the Serbian presence in Greece during the Great War.

Thessaloniki, and that this displeasure increased on the arrival of Serbian troops in the city. The writer of the article attempts to explain the reasons for the Serbian illegalities and asks his Greek readers to cooperate with them.

<sup>30</sup> A.S./MID-PO/1917, f. II, d. 1, Thessaloniki, 24.5.1917, Alexander Preradović (consular official) to the Serbian Foreign Ministry.

<sup>31</sup> AYE/1918 A/5-A/5/VIII: The Karatzova question, 30.10.1918, Interior Ministry to the Foreign Ministry.

<sup>32</sup> Miroslavljević, *ibid.*, 113–124

## Резиме

Лукианос Хасиотис

**Срби у Грчкој:  
Српско избеглиштво у Грчкој за време Првог светског рата**

Прилог је посвећен проблему српског избеглиштва у Грчкој током Првог светског рата, где је осим војске, владе и делова државног апарата, уточиште нашао и највећи део цивилних избеглица. Проблем смештаја, преживљавања, школовања деце, односи са грчким властима и становништвом, проблем дезертера. Аутор пружа једну сложу слику стварности, која није једнообразна, и захваљујући грчкој грађи коју је користио, обогатио је новим детаљима. Посебну пажњу посветио је утврђивању броја и састава (старосног, социјалног, националног), избегличке популације, као делатностима у организовању образовања избегличке деце, културним активностима, проблемима са грчким властима, реакцијама становништва на нагли прилив великог броја странаца, утицај унутрашњих грчких прилика на однос према избеглицама.

Јован Качаки

УДК 336.71(497.1)“1920/1944”

**Судбина блага Петроградске заложне банке  
(„Петроградская ссудная казна”)  
у Југославији 1920–1944. године**

*Апстракт:* На основу досљудних архивских докумената, новинских извештаја и мемоарске грађе реконструисана је судбина блага Петроградске заложне банке (сребрни, златни предмети – залози и дејозити), које је за време Грађанског рата у Русији, 1920. године досљело у Краљевину СХС (Југославију). То се благо, садржано у 1.618 сандука (вероватне тежине 140 тона), с крађама, продајом, проневерама и (најмање) враћањем првобитним власницима, до краја 1944. смањило на свега 20 сандука. Последње сандуке су руски избеглички квислинзи евакуисали у Немачку, где су, после слома Рајха, у америчкој окупационој зони, 1948. били продајни у бесцење.

## Кратка историја

У смутним данима грађанског рата на југу Русије 1918–1920. године, на станици Јејск (Ејск), антибольшевичке јединице заробиле су једну возну композицију. Она се неко време пре тога налазила и у рукама большевика – који, очигледно, нису схватили какав плен садржи. У тој композицији налазио се један део улога и залога Петроградске заложне банке<sup>1</sup>. Од тог тренутка почела је одисеја тог блага, која ће га током времена однети у Краљевину СХС (право у Котор, па после неколико година – преко Бакра, у Београд). У Београду је оно – делом већ смањено крађама и распродајама у Котору<sup>2</sup>, било чувано под контролом и повременим секвестром Министарства финансија Краљевине све до 1941. године. Тада су његове остатке одузеле немачке окупационе власти и предале (један део?) руској избегличкој квислиншкој управи. У септембру 1944. остаци тих остатака бивају евакуисани у Беч и Минхен, где се одисеја и завршава његовим нестанком.

<sup>1</sup> Генерал-лајтнант Ахрангелский, Сремски Карловци, 15.9.1922, Н° 01738 (Hoover Institution of War, Revolution and Peace, Atanford University, Stanford California, USA (у даљим напоменама: Hoover), Wrangel collection 94/5).

<sup>2</sup> Мирслав Јовановић, *Досељавање руских избеглица у Краљевину СХС 1919–1924*, Београд 1996, 259.