

Bojan Simić, *Stojadinović u Argentini*. Beograd: Institut za evropske studije, Fondacija „Svetozar Miletić“, 2022, 165 p.

Our historiography traditionally lacks biographies, and even works that are not true biographies, but which only have biographical traits. There are many reasons for this, one of the main ones being the incompleteness of archival sources on most prominent figures of our past. This objective reason is often coupled with a subjective one, i.e., that many people were politically undesirable for the powers-that-be at a given time. In a country rife with political intolerance and deficient in democratic traditions, the political climate too often influenced what subjects were to be researched and to what degree. In other words, the decisive factor was not importance of the subject itself, but the will of the powers-that-be. Thus, it became possible that we still do not have a complete biography of Milan Stojadinović, one of the most prominent political and economic figures in Serbian history of the 20th century. In larger historiographies, a person of such magnitude would have at least several different biographies written about him.

This deficit has already been noticed by several researches, but none of them researched systematically so many aspects of Milan Stojadinović's life as Bojan Simić. Having come of age as a historian at the time when it became clear that some of the once extolled heroes were not so grand after all, and when it became plain that the roles of many former "bad guys" had to be reconsidered or researched for the first time, he has been dealing, among other topics, with the fascinating personality of Milan Stojadinović. His latest book is one of those little books

that broaden the boundaries of knowledge about their respective topics.

As can be seen from the title itself, the book before us deals with Milan Stojadinović's departure for Argentina and with his life in that Latin American country. The book consists of the Preface by Miša Đurković, the head of the Institute of European Studies (pp. 9–11), an introductory study under the title *Milan Stojadinović in Argentina (1948–1961) – a contribution for a biography* (pp. 17–76), the list of sources and bibliography, (pp. 77–80), as well as translations of Argentinean documents (pp. 81–116), interviews and articles (pp. 117–145) and a collection of photographs (pp. 149–165).

To be sure, the most valuable part of the book is the introductory study (to use the misnomer again). It deals with several segments of Stojadinović's life – from his internment at Mauritius during WWII, through the immigration procedure through which he and his family arrived to Argentina, to his activities in his new land of residence. The procedure of gaining permission to enter Argentina was not simple, and was conducted separately for his wife and daughters and for himself. Spanners in the works were thrown more by the diplomacy of the United States than by socialist Yugoslavia, and it was a former Ustasha diplomat and friend of Argentinean president Peron, Dr. Branko Benzon, who helped Stojadinović obtain an Argentinean visa. It was decided by the very top brass to allow Stojadinović to enter the country, which is no wonder, since he was a former prime minister, and an internationally contested one.

What might be surprising were the contacts Stojadinović maintained with representatives of socialist Yugoslavia. However, when one looks closer, it is clear that both parties had their own interests: Stojadinović wanted to have his brother Dragomir set free from prison and his sister Nada given a job, whereas Yugoslav services wanted to influence anti-communist Yugoslav émigrés. Simić presumes the break-up of negotiations with representatives of the Yugoslav government in October 1953 spurred Stojadinović to launch his campaign for an independent Serbian state. Within that framework, he met the former Ustasha “Poglavnik” Ante Pavelić. The two former leaders agreed that it was necessary to set up independent Serbia and Croatia, but they did not go into the thorniest question of borders. Nothing more about the agreement is known, but due to bad press that both actors enjoyed on the opposite sides, it contributed to splits among both Serbian and Croatian émigré communities.

Separate part of Simić’s study deals with relations among the Serbian diaspora in Argentina, personified in the organization *Greater Serbia* (later on: Association of the Serbs in Argentina) and the journal *Serbian Flag* that covered Stojadinović’s activities. For his part, he denied having influence with the journal. It seems contacts with Pavelić facilitated the journal’s demise in 1956.

Simić features further a brief but interesting passage about Stojadinović’s business relationship with the great writer, Miloš Crnjanski. In a way that was a continuation of their cooperation from the inter-war period when both of them held government positions. The difference now was that financially deprived expatriate Crnjanski rendered intellectual services and collected materials for the former

prime minister, in exchange for small and irregular financial compensation.

The next part of the study deals with the question how Stojadinović became an Argentinean citizen. Again, he faced administrative obstacles that were partly due to misinformation obtained by Argentinean services. The last part of the study deals with Stojadinović’s private life –the fate of his family members, friendships, his social life etc. Bojan Simić’s study, although limited in length, brings interesting and new information about the final stage of Stojadinović’s life that will supply valuable material for compiling a complete biography of this important figure.

The book also features translations of the documents on which the study partly rests. The publishers deserve criticism for lack of pagination in this part of the book, an oversight that will make citing more difficult for future historians. What follows is an even more interesting part, containing interviews and articles. They offer an insight into almost inaccessible émigré press, which is a historiographical tit-bit in itself. At the very end of the book there are 15 photographs and two facsimiles from the Argentinean period of Stojadinović’s life. Regrettably, the photographs are grainy, although such as they are, they also enrich the pool of sources.

The latest book by Bojan Simić is not merely a collection of nuggets for Milan Stojadinović’s biography, but a well-filled bag of facts that will come in extremely handy to a future biographer of this controversial politician and economic expert. Considering the quality of his works on Stojadinović so far, one hopes the author of the future complete biography will actually be Simić himself.

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