

## REVIEW

### **Jovan Ćulibrk, *Historiography of the Holocaust in Yugoslavia***

A measure of the level of development of any historiography is its awareness of its own achievements, its reflection on itself, which is able to determine its own position within general historiography, thematically and methodologically. A mass and organized violence of XX century, a “century of extremism” that reached its own pick during the years of Second World War in the “death industry“, certainly is one of the key themes of contemporary historiography. Within that framework, a theme of Holocaust is surely one of the most important, although its significance exceeds the scope of historiography. It is also a kind of cultural litmus test, thus any serious analysis of historiography of Holocaust necessarily has to deal with it as with a first -rate social phenomenon.

In his work titled *Historiography of Holocaust in Yugoslavia* Jovan Ćulibrk approached the themes of Holocaust and writing on Holocaust just in the above manner.

Starting with the premise that the Holocaust study in Yugoslavia was “destined to deal with the perceptions of Yugoslavia and its own history” (page 8), the author emphasized that his main goal was to answer the two key questions: whether the Holocaust researchers were aware of development of model—criteria of Holocaust researches, and does the version of such criteria exist for the case of Yugoslavia. He structured his work in accord with requirements; he begins with the *Introduction*, which is the first chapter at the same time: *Criteria, Context, Politics* (pages 1-33). Discussing a social context of Holocaust researches in the 1990s in Yugoslavia’s successor- countries, the author concluded that ‘historiographical’ obsession with genocide and Holocaust in the Balkans at the end of XX century did not succeed to produce Holocaust research but only obsession with obsession (page 32).

Quite reasonably, the analysis of Holocaust historiography follows not only its dynamic, but also its broader social context and achievements. On that basis the periodization in this presentation was made, analyzing the period between the wars, the war years, the period since the end of the war until 1948, then the period ending with the

death of Tito, which was followed with the period ending in collapse of Yugoslav state. The last period started in 1991 and was finished in 2007.

In this comprehensive but concise work, the author has analyzed Holocaust historiography in Yugoslavia very successively, and more than that. Although the author remains focused on Holocaust historiography, his work is also a concise presentation of the Yugoslav historiography history. This history did not end in the year when the Yugoslav state ended, because the author is meticulously analyzing the Holocaust researches in post-Yugoslav states, alongside with the role they played during this bloody destruction of that state. The analysis included virtually all relevant works dealing with the Holocaust theme.

Seemingly aside of the basic course of discussion, the author offers extremely important observations and indications of some significant facts and events. Endorsing the mainstream of Holocaust researches, the author quite reasonably pointed out the request placed before the Holocaust researchers in Yugoslavia: it is not adequate to study it only within separate areas of occupation, thus losing the insight into its entirety, and it is necessary to study Holocaust in Yugoslavia within the framework of the general course of “Final solution of the Jewish question”.

Within final section of the second chapter entitled “*The Gates of Maturity*” (pages 138-178), the author offers one of the key points of his evaluation: Yugoslav communist historiography school ended tragically just when it was supposed to bring the fruits of its own liberation from ideological ballast (page 160). His conclusion under the indicative title *Neither Le Peau de Chagrin nor Leopard Skin*, the author argues that [Yugoslav] researchers of Holocaust did not succumb to its narrative and never departed from its actual context, the Second World War.

The three articles were added to main work, three essays on the books dealing with Holocaust, out of which two were related to the Holocaust in Yugoslavia, while the third refers to the phenomenon of the Holocaust from the perspective of its revisionists and deniers. These contributions well illustrate the author's methodological approach and nicely complement the main text.

The book also included an extensive selective bibliography on the historiography of the Holocaust in Yugoslavia, but there are also the most important book titles

belonging to the general history of the Holocaust. It is needless to point out how much the researchers would use this bibliography, because it included the works written not only in main world's languages, but also in Hebrew. At the end of the book there are registers of personal names and geographical terms.

With this work by Jovan Ćulibrk historiography has got a thoroughly and conscientiously written study, which will have to be consulted by anyone wanting to get acquainted not only with the subject of Holocaust historiography in Yugoslavia but also with the subject of Holocaust itself, because this book is also a valuable contribution to Holocaust historiography in general. Such works are rare even within much more developed historiographies. The special value of this study is that it was written in accord with contemporary methodological requirements, and trends in Holocaust historiography.

Due its clear and attractive style this book will be read not only by scholars but also by general public interested in this topic.

On the base of all these qualities, I feel free to recommend the work by John Ćulibrk entitled *Historiography of the Holocaust in Yugoslavia* to be published.

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