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### ***Srpska zastava* – The Bulletin of Serbian Immigrants to Argentina (1949–1956)**

ABSTRACT: Relying on available sources and literature, this article examines the establishment, activities, orientation and destiny of *Srpska zastava*, a bulletin published by Serbian immigrants in Argentina. It will scrutinize the bulletin's views on the solution to the Serbian Question, as well as its approach toward resolving the Serb-Croat dispute and its attitude toward the new Yugoslav authorities. Close attention has been paid to the links and cooperation the bulletin had with Milan Stojadinović, former Yugoslav prime minister (including foreign affairs) and finance minister, the most prominent figure among the Serbian immigrants.

KEY WORDS: *Srpska zastava*, Milan Stojadinović, Argentina, Yugoslavia, Emigration, Dušan M. Filipović

After World War II Argentina was the country with the largest number of Yugoslav immigrants in South America. They outnumbered all other South American countries combined.<sup>1</sup> The relative data is far from being consistent. According to the 1946 census conducted in Argentina, 29,164 persons declared themselves as being of Yugoslav origin. Over the

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1 There has been scarce literature on emigration from the former Yugoslavia to South America and Argentina. The most thoroughly researched has been the Croatian emigration, described in several monographs. Regarding the history of the emigrants from Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina it is worth mentioning: Милеса Стефановић-Бановић, Бранислав Пантовић, „Наша дијаспора у Аргентини – историјски преглед и прелиминарна истраживања“, *Гласник Етнографског института САНУ* LXI (1), 119–131; Гордан Стојовић, Маријан Миљић, *Црногорци у Јужној Америци*, (Подгорица: Центар за исељенике Црне Горе, 2012).

following 10 years, according to official data, another 14,200 people originally from Yugoslavia immigrated to the country.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the immigrant printed media as well as official sources from the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY) stated that this number was much higher. Based on data provided by the Yugoslav Legation in Buenos Aires, by the end of the 1940s the number of Yugoslav immigrants was estimated at 60–80 thousand. There was also a problem regarding the lack of statistics or records when the representatives of the new Yugoslav government took over the legation. They criticized the immigrant papers, which cited higher numbers, arguing that they (papers) had also counted “the third generation of our immigrants who had completely lost their national identity.” Immigrants from Serbia settled mainly in Buenos Aires and the surrounding area, while a large group of Montenegrins who were engaged in cotton production, either as plantation owners or as wage workers, populated the northern province of Chaco.<sup>3</sup> By the end of the examined period, which is the mid-1950s, the number of Yugoslav emigrants had increased and was estimated at 150–180 thousand. According to the legation staff, the vast majority were the Croats and Slovenes; the number of those designated as Montenegrins was 8–10 thousand, while only around 500 were designated as Serbs, mainly from Vojvodina.<sup>4</sup> The difference between the Argentinian official data and Yugoslav estimations was caused by Argentina's standpoint that everyone born on their territory was their citizen as well. Naturally, some of them were born in Austria-Hungary and therefore were not registered as Yugoslavs. At the time, one third of the entire population lived in Buenos Aires, which made the city and the surrounding area politically the most important part of the country.<sup>5</sup>

The relations between Argentina and socialist Yugoslavia in the first post-war decade were not of significant importance for either of the

2 Стефановић-Бановић, Пантовић, „Наша дијаспора у Аргентини“, 124–125; also: <http://serbiosunidos.com/sr/srbi-u-juznoj-americi/>, accessed December 14, 2019.

3 Diplomatski arhiv Ministarstva spoljnih poslova Republike Srbije, (Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia - DAMSP), PA, 1949, Argentina, f. 6, dos. 9, sign. 49700, Iseljavanje našeg naroda u Južnu Ameriku, 2.

4 DAMSP, PA, 1956, Argentina, f. 3, dos. 25, sign. 4169, Pregled stanja jugoslovenske ekonomske emigracije u Argentini u 1955. godini, 3. More on Serbian emigration to Argentina: Бојан Симић, „Српска емиграција у Аргентини у првој деценији након Другог светског рата – прилог истраживању проблема“, *Годишњак за друштвену историју* 2, 2019, 55–68.

5 According to the records from 1947, 4.7 out of 16 million inhabitants of Argentina lived in the capital. Jonathan C. Brown, *A Brief History of Argentina*, (New York: Checkmark Books, 2004), 288.

countries.<sup>6</sup> There was the huge geographical distance, first of all, as well as internal problems in both countries. Nevertheless relations existed and occasionally they were even dynamic. Formal diplomatic, consular, and trade relations between the FPRY and Argentina were established on September 16, 1946 by exchanging notes between General Ljubo Ilić, head of the Yugoslav diplomatic mission, and Juan Atilio Bramuglia, foreign minister of Argentina.<sup>7</sup>

There were certain issues between the two countries, the major ones being commercial contracts and trade, tolerating the activities of the Ustasha immigrants and Pavelić,<sup>8</sup> compensation for nationalized Argentinian property, visas for entering Argentina... Yugoslavia encountered an economic problem as well, namely imports were much higher than exports, causing a significant debt. In the mid-1950s the debt was around \$3 million, while in the previous period it was as high as \$9 million<sup>9</sup>. Trade and financial agreements between the two countries were signed in 1948 and 1954 stipulating terms both sides were to adhere to.<sup>10</sup> The second time, the FPRY delegation was headed by Minister Jakov Blažević. Yugoslavia would have a trade deficit for decades to come.<sup>11</sup>

By the middle of 1955 the government of the FPRY decided to raise the level of its diplomatic presence in Buenos Aires from a legation to an embassy. Argentina's reciprocal decision was delayed due to turmoil following a coup against President Peron and was not enacted before the beginning of the following year.<sup>12</sup> The Yugoslav side put off its announcement

6 Recently translated and published in Serbian the book of Félix Luna *Breve historia de los argentinos* (1993): Feliks Luna, *Kratka istorija Argentinaca*, (Novi Sad: Akadem-ska knjiga, 2015).

7 DAMSP, PA, 1947, Argentina, f. 9, dos. 2, sign. 4183, Odnosi sa Argentinom, 3. - Mis-sion of Gen Ilić was mentioned in a nutshell by Ljubomir Antić: „Prilog istraživanju odnosa naših iseljenika u Južnoj Americi prema NOB-u s posebnim osvrtom na JNO na Pacifiku“, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 18 (1), (Zagreb), 1986, 64, 73.

8 Pavelić arrived in Buenos Aires via Italy in November of 1948, using a false passport of the International Red Cross, No 74369, using the name Pal Aranyos. Documenta-tion with photos prepared for the purpose of the extradition request was filed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, Diplomatic archive, PA, 1951, Argentina, f. 3, dos. 32, signature 45959.

9 DAMSP, PA, 1956, Argentina, f. 3, dos. 10, signature 424146, Odnosi FNRJ – Argenti-na, 1–2.

10 Later commerce agreements were signed in 1958, 1961 and 1964. Vladimir Cvetko-vić, *Argentina*, (Beograd: Yugoslavia public, 1966), 70–71.

11 More on topic: Vladimir Grečić, *Argentina*, (Zagreb: Institute za zemlje u razvoju, 1979), 35.

12 DAMSP, PA, 1956, Argentina, f. 3, dos. 12, signature 41567, Podizanje poslanstva FNRJ u Argentinu na stepen ambasade, 1.

in the Official Gazette so that the process could be simultaneous. The first ambassador was Slavoljub Petrović, until then head of the Legation (his first name was mistakenly spelled Dragoljub in a decree dated March 6, 1956).<sup>13</sup> Ambassador Petrović was also accredited to Uruguay and Paraguay. The highest representatives of the FPRY in Buenos Aires before Ambassador Petrović were France Pirc, Marijan Stilinović, and Mišo Pavićević. The legation was ill famed because of several reported incidents and poor collegial relations that had been going on for years.<sup>14</sup> The major problem in bilateral relations was caused by legation head Stilinović, who instigated the Yugoslav immigrants to act against Peron's "pro-fascist bourgeois government" letting them use the legation premises. It took a while for the mistrust to subside.<sup>15</sup>

President Josip Broz had spoken to Petrović in September of 1953, shortly before he took charge, about the mistakes his predecessors had made. The ambassador was given directions on to expanding cooperation in all fields, especially in economy, pointing out the unacceptably low level of exchange of goods with such an important partner. Furthermore, President Broz emphasized the necessity to: cooperate with journalists, organize more frequent visits of Yugoslav emigrants to the homeland, and make mutual efforts to resolve the problem of Ustasha immigrants, which had been tainting relations between the two countries.<sup>16</sup>

By the end of the 1940s Argentina was the only Latin American country in which the Yugoslav immigrant press had started developing significantly. Yugoslav-oriented immigrants, as well as Croats, Slovenes, and Macedonians, had their own newspapers.<sup>17</sup> The press was free in general and it was possible to establish a newspaper with modest material means and without having to ask for the government's permission. There

13 Slavoljub Đera Petrović (Niš, 1920 – Belgrade, 2013) was a prominent People's Liberation Struggle combatant and South Serbia leader, member of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia, member of the Anti-Fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Serbia, member of federal parliament, member of the Serbian Parliament, Yugoslav ambassador to a number of European, African, and Latin American countries, deputy minister of foreign affairs, etc.

14 More on topic: Слободан Селинић, *Партија и дипломатија у Југославију 1945–1952*, (Београд, Институт за новију историју Србије, 2013), 342–343.

15 DAMSP, PA, 1957, Argentina, f. 4, dos. 2, signature 42543, *Argentinsko-jugoslovenski odnosi i naše aktivnosti u toku 1956. godine*, 10–11.

16 Slavoljub Đera Petrović, *Sećanja i zapisi jednog borca i diplomate*, (Beograd: DTA, 2007), 160–161.

17 Some of the journals were: *Jugoslovenski iseljenički vesnik*, *Slovenski glas*, *Makedonski glas*, *Hrvatska*, etc. DAMSP, PA, 1949, Argentina, f. 6, dos. 9, sign. 49700, Referat o jugoslovenskim iseljenicima u Južnoj Americi, 18–19.

were plenty of printed media, more than 2,000 according to some estimates, in numerous languages proving the presence of a large number of immigrants from all over the world. Later the situation deteriorated, the authorities started banning newspapers more frequently, introduced rationing of print paper in an attempt to impose discipline by limiting advertising space, and even established censors dubbed “account auditors.”<sup>18</sup> The Yugoslav-oriented press faced serious financial problems, so in the beginning of 1953 it was recorded at the FPRY Ministry of Foreign Affairs that they could no longer function and that they owed significant funds to printing offices.<sup>19</sup> Later reports would show that the previously established newspapers had been shut down.<sup>20</sup>

*Srpska zastava* (*The Serbian Flag*) was established in Buenos Aires in 1949, following the foundation of “Velika Srbija,” the association of the Serbs in Argentina, whose secretary was Dušan M. Filipović.<sup>21</sup> The association was the place of gathering of former members of the Serbian Red Cross (previous name of the association), namely older generations of emigrants, who arrived after World War II, political immigrants, members of the “Ravna gora” movement and opponents of the new Yugoslav regime living in the capital of Argentina and its provinces. Other sources suggest there was lack of unity in the association which led to a decision that only Serbs from Serbia could be its members.<sup>22</sup> “Velika Srbija” used to organize special ceremonies marking St. Sava Day and Vidovdan (St. Vitus Day).<sup>23</sup> Only a dozen issues of *Srpska zastava* have been preserved to date in libraries in Serbia and Croatia. Fortunately, Filipović collected most of the articles and published them in three volumes of roughly 900 pages. Ac-

18 DAMSP, PA, 1950, Argentina, f. 7, dos. 11, sign. 46886, 3–5; Colin M. Maclachlan, *Argentina, What Went Wrong*, (Westport–London: Praeger, 2006), 112.

19 DAMSP, PA, 1953, Argentina, f. 2, dos. 25, sign. 41837.

20 More on Croatian emigrant newspapers in Argentina of the time: Većeslav Holjevac, *Hrvati izvan domovine*, (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1967), 201–205.

21 There was an older Serbian emigrant club called “Obilić” which was established in Buenos Aires in 1946. Its principal objective was to protect the local Serbs against the influence of “the rest of the people’s enemies”. DAMSP, PA, 1947, Argentina, f. 9, dos. 16, sign. 427509, 16.

22 Istorijски arhiv Beograda (Historical archive of Belgrade – IAB), Zbirka BIA, Dos. Milan Stojadinović (70900415), dok. 87, Nekoliko podataka o Stojadinović Milanu i njegovim vezama, 3. mart 1950, 1.

23 *Srpska zastava* published the list of charitarians for 1949. The most generous charitarian was Augusta Stojadinović, the spouse of the former prime minister, with \$500, while other contributions were in the range of \$100 to \$200. *Srpska zastava*, No. 2, December 25<sup>th</sup> 1949, 3.

ording to the publisher, that was the way to preserve a “certain form of hope” for a better future for the generation he belonged to.

Dušan Filipović was born in Kragujevac in 1903. He attended grammar school in his home town and studied law in Belgrade where he specialized in autonomous state company administration. Later on he started a career in journalism. He wrote for *Industrijski Pregled*, *Opštinske novine*, and *Južna Zastava*. As a supporter of Stojadinović’s policy, he was a member of the Yugoslav Radical Union youth organization. After the change of government and the Cvetković-Maček Agreement from 1939, he approached the newly-formed Serbian Radical Party, whose registration had been denied by the authorities. During World War II he stayed in Belgrade. He was arrested by the new regime but released after a while. He moved to Argentina, via Italy, and started active political work within the Serbian immigrant community.<sup>24</sup> His parents and brothers remained in his hometown and the only thing he could do after his father Marko died a few years later was to write an obituary in the newspaper he was editing.<sup>25</sup>

Apart from regular associates situated in Argentina, *Srpska zastava* had dozens of activists in other countries. The bulletin was named after *Zastava*, a newspaper published by Svetozar Miletić, which had been rallying Serbs from Austria-Hungary. Articles were printed in Spanish and in Serbian, using the Latin alphabet. Only the name of the newspaper in the header was written in Cyrillic. The header also included the name in Spanish (*La Bandera Serbia*), as well as the subhead: “a newspaper of the South American Serbs.” Initially the bulletin was printed in 3,000 copies, and later on, according to Filipović, its circulation increased to 5,000 and was distributed on several continents<sup>26</sup>. The chief editor’s statement about its circulation could be brought into question, especially for the period of the early 1950s with the crisis in obtaining press paper in Argentina, bearing in mind that the newspaper *Vjesnik*, financed by the FPRY Legate in Buenos Aires, was printed in 1,200 copies.<sup>27</sup>

The first several issues carried the slogan: “Serbs, rally together” in its header, but it disappeared shortly afterwards. In general, the majority of articles were in Serbian, while those in Spanish dealt with the political and economic situation in Argentina. The initial plan was to have the

24 Biography data taken from: *Dokumenti Srpske zastave*, Vol. 3, ed. Dušan M. Filipović, (Asunción: Artes Graficas Zamphiropolos, 1980), as printed on cover page.

25 *Srpska zastava*, No. 32, 25. 12. 1954, 4.

26 *Dokumenti Srpske zastave*, Vol. 2, ed. Dušan M. Filipović, (Buenos Aires: s. n., 1977), 301.

27 DAMSP, PA, 1952, Argentina, f. 2, dos. 35, sign. 47694, 10.

bulletin issued monthly, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month, but this was not always the case due to financial constraints. For example, issue No. 3 was published four months after issue No 2. The bulletin had only four pages. One could acquire the paper at five locations in Buenos Aires, the addresses of which were printed in several issues. Most of the copies were distributed to readers by mail. In the beginning the annual subscription was 12 pesos or the equivalent of \$3 in local currency, depending on the subscriber's location. Since 1955 the annual subscription had been reduced to \$1 only. Apart from the resources provided by the editors, the bulletin was funded by donations as well. Some of the donors were acknowledged by having their names, sum of money donated, and country of residence printed in the journal.<sup>28</sup> *Srpska zastava* had a network of representatives in a number of countries on different continents. In 1950 the number of representatives was around 25, four of them in the United States.<sup>29</sup> It was advertised that the bulletin was “bringing information on global questions and Serbian topics in particular.”

In the very first issue dated November 25, 1949 it was underlined that the bulletin would propagate gatherings of Serbs and Serbian unity while the Yugoslav experience was seen as a mistake, an “injustice, corruption, and lie”. It was stated that the Serbs had lost their homeland not because they had made injustice to others, but because they had betrayed themselves, “thrown away their liberty and trampled on their own laws.” The article ends with a proclamation that it is of great necessity for Serbs to be Serbs, to be again what they had been for thirteen centuries before they ceased to exist as a nation for the last twenty years.<sup>30</sup> The same spirit existed throughout the life of the bulletin and it could be formulated as “free Serbianhood in a free Serbian state.” The man standing behind these words was none other than Milan Stojadinović, the former Yugoslav prime minister (encompassing foreign affairs) and finance minister.<sup>31</sup>

From the very beginning the existence and subsistence of the bulletin was in tight connection with Stojadinović, undoubtedly the most important figure among the Serbian expatriates who settled in Argentina after the World War II. He arrived in Buenos Aires in the spring of 1948 after

28 There was a list of nine donors, mostly from Argentina, but also from Canada and South Africa, published in April 1950 issue. Their donations ranged from \$10 to \$500. *Srpska zastava*, No. 3, April 25<sup>th</sup> 1950, 4.

29 *Srpska zastava*, No. 1 (3), June 25<sup>th</sup> 1950, 4.

30 *Dokumenti Srpske zastave*, Vol. 2, 301–302.

31 The article was headlined “Ne istim putem” and signed with his pen name of Hrebeljanović. *Srpska zastava*, No. 21, December 25<sup>th</sup> 1953, 1.

almost seven years of internment on Mauritius in the Indian Ocean.<sup>32</sup> Officially, he had planned to disembark in Brazil, however a brief stopover in the capital of Argentina decisively influenced him to change his mind regarding his final destination. During that short stay he met with several representatives of not only the Serbian immigrant community, but Croatian as well. Among them were two members of parliament from Stojadinović's list – Branko Novaković, brother of minister Niko Novaković, who was highly appreciated by the former prime minister, and Pero Kostić from Banja Luka. One of the leading representatives of the Argentinian Croats, Dr. Branko Benzon, a famous cardiologist close to the Peronists, also paid a visit to Stojadinović. The talks Stojadinović had on that occasion firmly assured him that he had found the right place of residence for him and his family. He was confident he would get on easily so he told his family to start learning Spanish.<sup>33</sup> According to information gathered by the UDBA, it was Dr. Benzon who played the crucial role in securing visas for Stojadinović and his family to enter Argentina.<sup>34</sup> By the way, Stojadinović never revealed, not even in his diary, to whom he appealed for organizing his meeting with President Juan Peron. There was only a diary entry that he had approached "a friend."<sup>35</sup>

Shortly after moving to the capital of Argentina, Stojadinović quickly adapted to a new environment and became full-time financial advisor to the government of the Buenos Aires province based in La Plata, as well as a special advisor to the Central Bank of Argentina. The new Yugoslav regime was informed that he had even been a consultant to the Argentinian Foreign Ministry and also had easy access to President Peron himself. It was assumed that the monthly income generated from these activities

32 He kept records about his stay on Mauritius in a diary published later in Melbourne titled *Zatočenik njegovog britanskog veličanstva*. About his internment and struggle to leave the island see: Љубодраг Димић, „Одлазак са Маурицијуса. Британци и Милан Стојадиновић (1945–1948)“, *Glas Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti* CDXX, Одељење историјских наука, Vol. 16–2012, 495–518; Коста Ст. Павловић, „Југословенско-британски односи 1939–1945“, *Гласник Српског историјско-културног друштва Његош*, бр. 34, јун 1975, 73–103; Бојан Симић, „У сребрном кавезу – Милан Стојадиновић на Маурицијусу (1941–1948)“, *Баштина*, бр. 47, 2019, 343–356.

33 Милан Стојадиновић, *Заточеник његовог британског величанства*, (Мелбурн: Српска мисао, 1976), 188–189. - Among the others who visited him, Stojadinović mentioned lawyer Vinko Zorc, Colonel Vauhnik and the King's adjutant Pogačnik.

34 IAB, BIA, 70900415/87-1, Nekoliko podataka o Stojadinović Milanu i njegovim vezama, 29. mart 1950.

35 Стојадиновић, *Заточеник његовог британског величанства*, 186.



came to around \$2,000.<sup>36</sup> Stojadinović once told Boško Vidaković that during the first year in Argentina he and his family had resided at a hotel at the government's expense, as he was a guest of President Peron.<sup>37</sup> It was not a secret for the local press or for the FPRY Legation in Buenos Aires that he had frequent audiences with President Peron.<sup>38</sup>

The former Yugoslav prime minister did not want to be directly engaged in the activities of the Serbian immigrant community. Representatives of the "Velika Srbija" association failed to persuade him to formally take part in the work of the group, instead they appointed him as honorary president. Stojadinović supported *Srpska zastava*, both morally and financially, but in a strictly unofficial capacity. He took part in the festivities organized by the bulletin but had no effective function in the editorial board, nor signed articles using his real name. From the bulletin's very onset he hid behind aliases such as Hrebeljanović and "Stari Radikal." Before the first issue was published Filipović had asked him to review the content. Even though he supported the launching of *Srpska zastava*, Stojadinović turned the editor down as he did not want to be seen as someone who defined the bulletin's political orientation.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, his influence was enormous and he knew how to use it in discussions with representatives of the Second Yugoslavia in 1952 and 1953.<sup>40</sup>

The problem of *Srpska zastava* was raised in the very first conversation with intelligence officer Boško Vidaković on August 20, 1952. Vidaković deemed that the bulletin stood on "positions of Serbian chauvinism." Stojadinović replied that the bulletin was published by his friends but he argued that their aim was to offset the "Ustasha and Greater Croatia leaflets" printed in Argentina. He also insisted that he had not written a single article for *Srpska zastava*, and that its publishers were pro-Yugoslav oriented.<sup>41</sup> Both statements would prove to be false.

36 IAB, BIA, 70900415/91-1.

37 IAB, BIA, 70900415/92-6, Razgovor s Milanom Stojadinovićem održan 20. avgusta 1952. godine.

38 There was an interesting detail in the conversation between Pavićević, the Yugoslav legate, and Robert Balache, secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Argentina, held on January 20, 1953. The Argentinian official asked Pavićević what he knew about Stojadinović's recent audience with Peron. The Yugoslav diplomat answered that it was a "business-related meeting," trying to leave an impression of indifference. DAMSP, PA, 1953, F. 2, dos. 12, sign. 42769, 6.

39 *Dokumenti Srpske zastave*, Vol. 2, 132–133.

40 In the UDBA'S reports Stojadinović was codenamed Mercedes.

41 IAB, BIA, 70900415/92-3, Razgovor s Milanom Stojadinovićem održan 20. avgusta 1952. godine.

The writing of *Srpska zastava* was a topic in almost all conversations Stojadinović had with the FPRY representatives. One of those representatives was Miloš Piljuga, a member of the legation staff. Apart from the legation staff, talks were also conducted with agents coming from Yugoslavia. Stojadinović was primarily interested in releasing his younger brother Dragomir from prison in Sremska Mitrovica and employing his sister Nada in Belgrade. The writing of *Srpska zastava* was his main bargaining chip in these negotiations, in addition to a vague readiness to produce some financial reports, assistance in making trade agreements with Argentina, and activism against the Ustasha immigrants. The other side was insistent on putting down the articles against Socialist Yugoslavia and shifting the bulletin's attacks on the Ustashes. Stojadinović was taking credit for all the texts criticizing the Ustashes, Pavelić in the first place but also Stepinac, which was a major theme by the end of 1952 when the FPRY broke off diplomatic relations with the Vatican.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, he was negating his influence on the bulletin's writing when the new regime and Josip Broz Tito were the targets of criticism. He would then equivocate about stubbornness and independence of Chief Editor Filipović. Writing about Stepinac might be considered a rare example of concessions made by Stojadinović. The case was initially used by *Srpska zastava* to condemn socialist Yugoslavia, but later on Stojadinović wrote two articles against Stepinac.<sup>43</sup> Regardless of Stojadinović's personal promise to moderate the bulletin's attitude toward Marshal Tito, that would soon prove to be to no avail.<sup>44</sup>

The bulletin was very loyal to the Argentinian Government. The articles were radiating a feeling of gratitude toward the good hosts who accepted the Serbian emigrants and gave them a chance for a new beginning. It was in a very early issue, No.2, when the front page was covered by a long article in Spanish with photos of Juan and Eva Peron and Colo-

42 The break-off in relations between the two states took place in late 1952 after Archbishop Stepinac had been created a cardinal. It was not before 1966 that diplomatic relations had been re-established. More on topic: Radmila Radić, „Jugoslavija i Vatikan. Od prekida diplomatskih odnosa do Drugog vatikanskog koncila (1953–1962)“, *Spoljna politika Jugoslavije 1950–1961*, ed. Slobodan Selinić, (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2008), 322–349.

43 IAB, BIA, 70900415/104-1, Izveštaj o razgovoru sa Mercedesom, 2. oktobar 1953.

44 The rationale behind his suggestion for *Srpska zastava* to stop attacking Josip Broz was that Broz was no longer prime minister but the President of Yugoslavia. IAB, BIA, 70900415/103-1, Zabeleška o razgovoru sa Mercedesom, 30. jul 1953.

nel Domingo Marcante, governor of Buenos Aires Province.<sup>45</sup> The supportive attitude toward the ruling structures continued over time as witnessed by the lines written after a failed coup in June of 1955, stating that the President of Argentina had been saved by “God, the army and the people”.<sup>46</sup> Eventually, Peron was forced to leave the country a few months later, and the bulletin again remained loyal to the new government. In the September issue, the cover page was reserved for the speech of the new acting president, General Eduardo Lonardi, including the whole in Spanish and a summary in Serbian.<sup>47</sup> Naturally, the unstable situation in the country produced fear that the bulletin could be banned if critical toward the new authorities.<sup>48</sup> Another evidence of loyalty was the fact that the ceremonies organized by the Serbs in Argentina always started with the anthem of Argentina and followed by the Serbian anthem “God of Justice.”

Throughout almost seven years of the bulletin’s life there were several major directions of its activities. The main one was the attempt to homogenize the Serbian people in Latin America and all across the world by evoking an emotional version of its history painted by both epic bravery and extreme suffering. Cultural accomplishments of the Serbian people were glorified as well as the role of the Serbian Orthodox Church in defending the nation. Another direction was a strong criticism of the new regime in Yugoslavia, and the Ustasha atrocities during the World War II. The somewhat subjective version of history offered by the bulletin was enhanced by numerous poems, either verses of well-known epic poetry or attempts at patriotic by the Serbian emigrants. There were plenty of reviews of historical events and figures, different testimonies and documents in line with the aforementioned motives.

What characterized *Srpska zastava* were frequent polemics that the editor, Filipović, and his associates had with other Serbian emigrants,

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45 Domingo Marcante (1898–1976) was one of Peron’s most influential associates and governor of Buenos Aires province from 1946 to 1952. In 1953 he fell into disfavor and was thrown out of the party, which effectively meant the end of his political career. He was close to Stojadinović.

46 Text goes as follows: “A failed coup on June 16 shows again that General Peron enjoys wide support of the people and the army. His opponents, realizing that they could not defeat him in elections, wanted to overthrow him by force: namely with bombs and machine guns. They failed. God, the army, and the people saved him.” *Srpska zastava*, No. 39, June 25, 1955, 1.

47 *Srpska zastava*, No. 42, September 25, 1955, 1.

48 Instability was evident as early as November when General Lonardi was replaced by General Pedro Aramburu who instigated a fierce confrontation with Peron’s supporters. Maclachlan, *Argentina, What Went Wrong*, 125–128; Brown, *A Brief History of Argentina*, 218–230.

particularly those opposed to Stojadinović. This was the case with Dragiša Cvetković and Časlav Nikitović, who started publishing *Dokumenti o Jugoslaviji* in Paris; the pro-Ljotić newspaper *Iskra* (*Spark*); pre-war senator Jovan Banjanin, etc. Those polemics were quite intense, bearing in mind that the other side was also vocal in its attacks against Stojadinović and Filipović, depicting the latter as the “leader of Stojadinović’s motorized green shirts.”<sup>49</sup> Generally speaking, many articles were devoted to other emigrant papers and organizations regarded as diverging from the “Serbian path.”

The bulletin’s ties with Stojadinović were obvious to every single reader. *Srpska zastava* carried all the statements the former prime minister made to foreign and domestic journalists, translating articles about him, following his activities at Serbian immigrant ceremonies, etc. Over the years he was interviewed by Argentinian journals such as *La Razón*, *Diplomacia*, *El Hogar*, *El Mundo Argentino*, and also by Italian journals *Corriere della Sera*, *Settimo Giorno*, Croatian emigrant journals *Izbor* (*Choice*), etc. In all of these articles Stojadinović was portrayed in a positive way, sometimes even panegyrically.<sup>50</sup>

The close ties between *Srpska zastava* and Stojadinović were demonstrated on the occasion of establishing the Serbian Radical Party’s Committee for Europe on April 7<sup>th</sup> 1955, which was announced in the bulletin. It was a proclamation written in ten paragraphs and signed in Bad Salzuffen, Germany. Around fifteen less known Serbs took part at the event.<sup>51</sup> A similar committee was also established in Salzburg by the local Serbs, Stojadinović’s supporters. There were five names on the list headed by Nikola Mrvaljević, former member of the Serbian Radical Party, who fled from Yugoslavia in 1952.<sup>52</sup> The working committee of the Serbian Radical Party in exile, manned principally by *Srpska zastava* associates and editor Filipović, was founded in Buenos Aires. The committee had a very limited mandate and a symbolic role in maintaining links with supporters worldwide, as well as the advocacy and promotion of the party program.<sup>53</sup> Stojadinović personally approved the foundation of the committee but was not particularly active on that issue.

49 *Dokumenti Srpske zastave*, Vol. 1, 200–201.

50 Stojadinović had been depicted as the “Hjalmar Schacht of the Balkans,” “a man who outwitted Hitler,” “a defender of neutrality”, etc. *Dokumenti Srpske zastave*, Vol. 1, 224–225.

51 *Srpska zastava*, No. 37, April 25<sup>th</sup> 1955, 2; *Dokumenti Srpske zastave*, Vol. 2, 124–125.

52 *Dokumenti Srpske zastave*, Vol. 3, 48.

53 *Dokumenti Srpske zastave*, Vol. 2, 306–310.

*Srpska zastava* indicated the year of 1939 and the dismissal of Stojadinović as the crucial moments that subsequently led to the tragedy of the Serbian people, which was “still continuing.” Several articles from different periods denoted that particular year as the “turning point” when the country’s neutral policy was replaced by a pro-axis course of action. The blame fell on Prince Pavle and Dragiša Cvetković, who did not want Yugoslavia coming out the war “the way Sweden and Turkey did.” *Srpska zastava* printed a facsimile of the article from the Bulgarian war-time press, dated May 3, 1942, in which Cvetković admitted that Macedonia was a part of Bulgaria.<sup>54</sup> The bulletin criticized many other Serbian politicians, including Lazar Marković and Chetnik Commander Dobroslov Jevdjević. It is worth mentioning that Slobodan Jovanović was criticized on several occasions during the war because of his political engagements, but at the same time was admired as a writer and historian who was regarded as “one of the most prominent representatives of the Serbian people.”<sup>55</sup>

Josip Broz Tito, the leader of the Second Yugoslavia, was often criticized very severely, both for his personality and for his policy. He was dubbed an “imaginary greatness” who “happened to enter Serbia while it was occupied by millions of Russian soldiers, heading the horde of communists, former Ustashas, and other scumbags.”<sup>56</sup> The Federative People’s Republic of Yugoslavia was called a “red experiment scene,” a “bloody and terrorist regime,” “Tito’s dungeon,” and “Titoslavia.” There were sequels about the luxurious life of “Tito’s oligarchs.”<sup>57</sup> The stories were filled with the testimonies from the remote homeland. An insight into the later issues of *Srpska zastava* shows somewhat less frequent mentioning of the new authorities in Yugoslavia, which could be connected with the aforementioned talks Stojadinović had had with its representatives. Despite everything, the criticism never stopped.<sup>58</sup>

On the other hand, the bulletin published several affirmative articles about General Mihailović. He was described as a hero who had “chosen to stay and die in the country and thus live forever in history.”<sup>59</sup> Historical files were also printed regularly, both older ones and those from

54 *Srpska zastava*, No. 45, June 25<sup>th</sup> 1956, 1.

55 *Srpska zastava*, No. 32, December 25<sup>th</sup> 1954, 1.

56 *Dokumenti Srpske zastave*, Vol. 1, 226–227.

57 The first article on that topic was published in issue No. 14 on May 23, 1953 bringing the story about Blagoje Nešković and his holiday in Dubrovnik.

58 Some of the articles are: “Propadanje seljaka u Srbiji” No. 41 and “Čemu nas Tito uči?” No. 45.

59 *Srpska zastava*, No. 40, July 25<sup>th</sup> 1955, 3.

recent history. On several occasions the bulletin published the testimonies of actual participants of the events, such as: General Svetomir Đukić, who witnessed the talks that Ante Pavelić held in Zagreb in 1944 and the conflict between Pavle Đurišić and Draža Mihailović in 1945; the recollections of General Milojko Janković on Subašić's offer to replace General Mihailović in July of 1944; the written record of Voyvoda Momčilo Đujić on the events of May 1945 (the letter was photographed and printed in issue No. 40), etc. During 1955 and 1956 the bulletin published numerous excerpts from the memoirs of King Petar II.

Throughout its life the bulletin had around one hundred correspondents, Serbs from "five continents" and allegedly from "38 countries." The most eminent among them were generals Đorđe Glišić and Svetomir Djukić,<sup>60</sup> Chetnik Voyvoda Bogdan Gordić, Momčilo Vuković - Birčanin, Captain Đorđe Seb. Roše, economist Milan Milutinović, lawyer Nikola N. Tomić, professor Nasif Gačović, journalists Milan Mikašinić<sup>61</sup> and Gvozden Bralović, etc.<sup>62</sup> Naturally, by far the largest contribution, both in material resources and in the number of articles written, was provided by the editor and owner, Dušan Filipović.

A particularly important activity of *Srpska zastava* is its coverage of the period after the second half of 1954, namely after Stojadinović's interview to *Izbor*, a Croatian journal printed in Buenos Aires, about the need for reconciliation between the two nations. He received Josip Subašić, the editor of *Izbor*, at his home on July 29, 1954 and said that the Serbs and Croats had lived "in separate countries for centuries" and that such should be the case in the future as well.<sup>63</sup> He expressed the hope that good-neighboring relations and cooperation would be possible after the question of statehood had been resolved. That statement received comments by the Argentinian, German, English, and Italian press.<sup>64</sup> As expected, most of the

60 For the biographies of the generals see: Mile S. Bjelajac, *Generali i admirali Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1918-1941*, (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije - Dobra d.o.o, 2004), 150-151, 153-154.

61 Milan Mikašinić was Stojadinović's associate when he was prime minister. As a journalist he worked at the press bureau of the Yugoslav Radical Union. During the war he wrote for *Novo vreme* (*The New Times*) as a correspondent from Berlin. He was also engaged in Stojadinović's journal *El Economista* in Argentina.

62 Biographies of the most of the aforementioned could be found in *Dokumenti Srpske zastave*, Vol. 3, 190-198.

63 *Izbor*, No. 10, July 1954, 8.

64 *Il Tempo* (Rome) put it on the front page that Stojadinović and Pavelić were engaged in a struggle for the right of the Serbian and Croatia people to self-determination. *Il tempo*, No. 222, August 11<sup>th</sup> 1954, 1.

comments came from the Serbian and Croatian emigrant journals. *Srpska zastava* frequently reprinted those articles along with the editorial comments, engaged in polemics with the criticizers and emphasized the views of those who supported Stojadinović's views. The aforementioned writings completely illustrated the issues published in the second half of 1954 and through 1955. The journal reacted on the writings of emigrant press, namely *Jugoslovenski američki glasnik* from San Francisco, *Glas kanadskih Srba*, *Sloboda* from Chicago, Vojvoda Jevđević's *Srpske novine*, *Kanadski Slobodan*, etc. *Srpska zastava*'s view was that the Ustasha atrocities during World War II were horrendous and indisputable, but a peaceful split-up was a better solution than "a war of annihilation." The bulletin did not report a single word on the talks between Stojadinović and Pavelić.<sup>65</sup>

After having arrived in Argentina in 1955, Dragomir Stojadinović also influenced the bulletin's policy. Shortly before his departure he had offered to use the *Srpska zastava* for attacks on Prince Pavle and Dragiša Cvjetković using materials provided by UDBA agents. In a separate discussion he proposed influencing his brother to cease financial support to the bulletin and consequently cause its shutdown. The operative who spoke to him in the premises of the agency for control of foreigners instructed him to work on shutting down the *Srpska zastava* or at least shifting its focus on writing against the Ustashas.<sup>66</sup> It is hard to evaluate the real influence of the younger Stojadinović on shutting down *Srpska zastava*, but it is a clear fact that 1956 was the last year in which the bulletin existed, with only one issue being published with a delay of more than six months. According to the records, there were 45 issues altogether, some of which were double issues. On a later occasion in Buenos Aires, Dragomir Stojadinović confirmed that the bulletin would cease to come out and that Milan had told him that "there was no longer any point in beating a dead horse."<sup>67</sup> It was obvious that the bulletin could not survive without the former prime minister's material and moral support. Shaken by the downfall of Peron and by the negative resonance of his talks with Pavelić, Stojadinović terminated any further

65 Rare testimonies of that meeting were analyzed in: Миша Ђурковић, „Увод: Енигма Милана Стојадиновића“, *Милан Стојадиновић: Политика у време глобалних ломова*, (Београд: Завод за уџбенике – Центар за конзервативне студије, 2013), 24–25. Some of the articles from the aforementioned polemic in emigrants' press could be found in: Bogdan Krizman, *Pavelić u bjekstvu*, (Zagreb: Globus, 1986), 261–288.

66 IAB, BIA, 70900415/106-1, Izveštaj o razgovoru sa Stojadinović Dragomirom vođenim 7. 11. 1955. godine u prostorijama službe za kontrolu stranaca.

67 IAB, BIA, 70900415/107-1, Zabeleška o razgovoru sa Dragomirom Stojadinovićem, 26. maj 1957.

engagement in the Serbian immigrants' bulletin. In spite of that, Dušan Filipović remained faithful to Stojadinović's work and published several recollections about him after his death, crediting Stojadinović with being the "greatest son of the Serbian people of our time."<sup>68</sup>

In 1958 Filipović moved to Paraguay and settled there. As already mentioned, by the end of the 1970s he had released a three-volume edition made up mostly of articles published in the *Srpska zastava*. Even then he did not want to admit that Stojadinović effectively owned the bulletin. He argued if Stojadinović had intended to own a Serbian journal in Argentina, it would have been published on a regular weekly basis, not sporadically, with financial limitations.<sup>69</sup>

We can conclude that the writing of the *Srpska zastava* has been of significant importance for understanding the course of the activity and thinking of not only the Serbian emigrants who ended up in Argentina after World War II, but also throughout the whole world. Also, the bulletin's writing has been precious for reconstructing the late phase of the life and work of Milan Stojadinović, the former Yugoslav prime minister, who was granted Argentinian citizenship in 1960, a year before he died.<sup>70</sup>

### Summary

*Srpska zastava*, a bulletin of the Latin American Serbs, was published in Buenos Aires from the end of the 1940s and through the first half of the 1950s. Its correspondents were Serbian emigrants on several continents. The bulletin's principal program called for the Serbs to unify and rally to create an independent Serbia. Basically, it was an attempt to homogenize the Serbian people in Latin America and all across the world by evoking an emotional version of its history characterized by epic bravery and extreme suffering. The bulletin stood firmly against both the government of socialist Yugoslavia and the Ustasha crimes during World War II.

The bulletin and its activities were closely linked to Milan Stojadinović, former Yugoslav prime minister, who arrived in Argentina in 1948 after an eight-year internment. He did not accept any formal engagement

68 Article "Sećanja na dr Milana Stojadinovića" published in *Letopis*, 1974–1975, Vol. 53, 117–128, *Srpska misao*, Melbourne, and later on edited and published in: *Dokumenti Srpske zastave*, Vol. 2, 284–315.

69 *Dokumenti Srpske zastave*, Vol. 3, 8.

70 Stojadinović first applied for citizenship in 1955 but was refused due to the course of events that had followed the fall of Peron. Uki Goñi, *The Real Odessa: Smuggling the Nazis to Peron's Argentina*, (London: Granta books, 2002), 127.



in the bulletin or in immigrant affairs, but he had a huge informal influence on the bulletin's policy, whether through the articles he wrote or the financial support he provided. With the passing of time that influence was almost tangible in the writings of the paper, which became a playground for Stojadinović and his supporters.

Stojadinović tried to cash in on his significant impact on the bulletin during the talks he had with the representatives of the UDBA in 1952 and 1953. The regime officials were profoundly disturbed by the writing of *Srpska zastava* so they kept insisting on shutting the paper down or at least softening its stance toward the FPRY and diverting its attacks to the Ustashas. On the other hand, Stojadinović was trying to get his brother Dragomir out of prison.

Apart from the termination of Stojadinović's direct support, the shutdown of *Srpska zastava* was caused by a dire financial situation of the editor and his associates, as well as the political and economic crisis in Argentina, which affected the entire press in the country. *Srpska zastava*, a bulletin of the Serbs from Latin America, is an important source for getting a deeper understanding of the activity and way of thinking of the Serbian emigrants who ended up in Argentina after the World War II. Also, the bulletin's writing has been instrumental in reconstructing the latter phase of the life and work of Former Yugoslav Prime Minister Milan Stojadinović.

*(Translated from Serbian by Darko Perišić)*

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## Резиме

Бојан Симић

### ***Српска застава* – лист српске емиграције у Аргентини (1949–1956)**

АПСТРАКТ: У раду се на основу доступних извора и литературе анализира оснивање, делатност, оријентација и судбина листа српске емиграције у Аргентини – *Српска застава*. Разматран је став овог гласила према решавању српског питања, као и о односу према решавању српско-хрватског спора и новим југословенским властима. Посебна пажња посвећена је везама и сарадњи листа са бившим председником југословенске владе, министром спољних послова и финансија Миланом Стојадиновићем, најзначајнијом личношћу међу тамошњим емигрантима.

Кључне речи: *Српска застава*, Милан Стојадиновић, Аргентина, Југославија, емиграција, Душан М. Филиповић

Лист Срба Јужне Америке *Српска застава* излазио је крајем четрдесетих и у првој половини педесетих година у Буенос Ајресу. Он је окупао сараднике из српске емиграције са више континента. Главни програм листа било је уједињење и окупљање Срба са циљем стварања независне српске државе. Радило се о покушају хомогенизације српског народа у Јужној Америци, и широм света, кроз емотивну верзију његове прошлости коју су обележила велика јунаштва, али и страдања. *Српска застава* је оштро иступала против власти социјалистичке Југославије, као и против усташких злочина током Другог светског рата.

Постојање и деловање листа је у уској вези са доласком и боравком бившег председника југословенске владе Милана Стојадиновића у Аргентини, у коју је стигао, после осмогодишње интернације, 1948. године. Он није званично прихватио ангажовање у листу и емиграцији, али је неформално имао велики утицај на *Српску заставу*, како кроз текстове које је писао тако и кроз савете и материјалну подршку. То се итекако осетило на писању листа, који је, како је време одмицало, све више постајао полигон за деловање Стојадиновића и његових присталица.

Свој утицај на ово гласило Стојадиновић је покушао да искористи и у разговорима са представницима Удбе током 1952. и 1953. године. Представницима нових југословенских власти сметало је писање *Српске заставе* и стално су настојали да лист престане са излажењем или да бар свој курс према ФНРЈ ублажи а оштрицу напада окрене према усташама. С друге стране, Стојадиновић је био заинтересован за пуштање брата Драгомира из затвора.

На престанак рада *Српске заставе*, поред отказивања директне подршке Стојадиновића, утицала је материјална ситуација уредника и помагача листа, као и политичка и економска криза у Аргентини која се одразила на целокупну штампу у тој земљи. *Српска застава*, лист Срба Јужне Америке, значајан је извор за разумевање деловања и начина размишљања дела српске емиграције који се након Другог светског рата обрео у Аргентини. Такође, текстови објављени у листу су важни и за реконструисање последње фазе живота и рада некадашњег југословенског премијера Милана Стојадиновића.