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The neighbour in the Balkans – a close Friend or a treacherous Enemy? The case of Bulgarians and Serbs[1]

At the end of the nineteenth century, the renowned Bulgarian writer Aleko Konstantinov's most famous character Bay Ganyo, exclaimed: "Serbs? I know their tricks!" (Konstantinov 1989a, 36). This clearly indicates a popular attitude of distrust and neglect in the young Bulgarian state, too busy finding its new modern identity and affirming its own national ideals. However, in his travel notes *To Chicago and back* (where Bay Ganyo appears again), that same Aleko Konstantinov (1863–1897) was capable of affectionately retelling his warm encounter with a Serbian citizen named Nedković at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. The two sang *Hristos Voskrese* [Christ is risen] in Old Slavic at an American bar, "much to the amusement of the bar's American visitors" (Konstantinov 1989b, 45–46).

In the spirit of Maria Todorova's (2009) study of how the image of the Balkans is constructed outside the peninsula, the aim of this contribution is to reflect on how the Balkan peoples see their neighbors and what the stereotypes of these images are, in the specific case of Bulgarians and Serbs. A modest task has been set, just to start the debate.

Bulgarians and Serbs have been connected for centuries by cultural and historical universalism which is almost unprecedented in the world (cf. Pantev 1999b, 9). Since Khan Presian's campaigns during the ninth century, the two peoples have waged seven wars against each other, four during the Middle Ages and three during modern times, which became engraved in their respective historic memories. In both cases, though, this memory is strangely selective: Bulgarians exhibited ag-

1 An abridged version of this text was presented at the international conference "Imagining the Serb" organised by Božidar Jezernik at the University of Ljubljana in 2011. At this conference I met Dagnoslaw Demski for the first time.

gressive pride in their 1885 victory against "Serbian deceitfulness", despite the fact that they had a common enemy in Ottoman Turkey. Even today, however, nobody in Bulgaria makes an effort to understand how unpopular this war actually was in Serbia itself (Ilchev 2019a, 574). On the other hand, nobody in Serbia understood the real motives behind the Bulgarian army's attack in 1913 that began the Second Balkan War, also known as the "War among allies": an act of insanity, for which Bulgarians were punished severely enough by the failure of their attempts at national unification. Lady Durham[2] was shocked when Serbians rejoiced after the defeat of the 1903 Ilinden uprising against Ottoman rule in Macedonia, organised by revolutionaries who identified themselves as Bulgarians. Decades later, Ilya Ehrenburg (1891–1967) was, in turn, disgusted by Sofia's joyful reaction to the German aerial bombardment that destroyed large parts of Belgrade during the Second World War (Pantev 1999b, 9).

On the eve of the Second World War, the renowned Bulgarian historian Petar Mutafchiev summarised Bulgaria's "national catastrophe" after the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, comparing it to Serbian history thusly:

> [...] in the darkness of their insignificant lives, among countless difficulties, they [the Serbs] were getting ready for the great moment when the fate of all peoples would be decided. At this moment, they, the weak and neglected, whom we [the Bulgarians] used to see as despicable, turned out to be not only livelier but also much wiser than us who lived with the illusion of power and supremacy (Mutafchiev 1987, 154).

Here, however, is the "reply" concerning disregard from the Serbian side, as seen in an article by the Serbian journalist Radoslav Petković in the Belgrade newspaper *Blic* [Flash] in the year 2011:

> We know nothing about Bulgarian history, but we have the impression that they [Bulgarians] are stupid, primitive and savage. Neither of us must be deceived about the other. Tell some Serb that the Bulgarian state had a more important role in the Balkans during the Middle Ages than Serbia, and this would be automatically considered high treason, despite being an (un)pleasant fact (Petković 2011).

2 Mary Edith Durham (1863–1944) was a British artist, anthropologist and writer who is best known for her anthropological accounts of life in Albania in the early twentieth century.

Geographically, Serbia and Bulgaria are the primary Balkan states of today, forming the "backbone" of our much-suffering peninsula. It is natural to raise the question: Can there be stability given the abnormal relationship between them? As a historian and ethnologist, I can reply: as long as historical emotions prevail over reason, Balkan destinies will be settled outside the Balkans.

The image of the Serb is not present in classical Bulgarian folklore. Groups recognised as "foreign" include Turks (even in the "Bosnian Turks" variation, meaning Bosnians), Greeks, Wallachians, Jews and even "Latins" (meaning Catholics), but not Serbs. The hero's classical "enemy" in Bulgarian hero epics was a Turk, the cheater was a Greek or sometimes a Jew, but there were no Serbs. Serbs began appearing in urban Bulgarian songs, performed at fairs and markets by travelling musicians and recorded in popular song books, only after the Serbo-Bulgarian War of 1885.[3] Until then, even in the age of the Bulgarian Renaissance, the ideologists of the Bulgarian liberation movement viewed Serbia as a helper, closely related by descent, language and religion, on whom they could rely for assistance in organising a revolution against Ottoman rule. It was Belgrade that acted as a temporary residence for some of the most famous Bulgarian revolutionaries; it was there that Georgi Rakovski's First Bulgarian Legion[4] was organised in 1862 with the intention of liberating Bulgaria, following Garibaldi's example; it was the Serbian army in which thousands of Bulgarian volunteers enlisted during the numerous Serbo-Turkish Wars, hoping to liberate their home regions from the Sultan's rule. Later, however, when it became clear that Serbian politicians were following Ilija Garašanin's *Načertanije* [The Draft][5] and were actually using the Bulgarian liber-

3 The Serbo-Bulgarian War broke out between the Kingdom of Serbia and the Principality of Bulgaria, on November 14, 1885. It ended on November 28, 1885, immediately after the unification of the Principality with Eastern Rumelia (today's Southern Bulgaria), a vassal of the Ottoman Sultan by virtue of the decisions of the Berlin Congress in 1878. Despite Bulgaria's status as a vassal of the Ottoman Empire, the Ottomans did not intervene in the war. Serbia treacherously attacked the young Principality, but suffered a decisive defeat.

4 The First Bulgarian Legion was a military unit formed in Belgrade by Bulgarian volunteers during the Serbo-Turkish conflict of 1862. According to the plan of the organiser Georgi Rakovski (1821–1867), the unit was to incite the Bulgarians in the Ottoman Empire to revolt, as per Giuseppe Garibaldi's model. In practice, the legion participated in the battles for the Belgrade Fortress, but never entered Ottoman territory. After three months of existence, it was disbanded by the Serbian government under pressure from the Great Powers.

5 The *Načertanije* (1844) of Serbian minister Ilija Garašanin (1812–1874) is considered to be the ideological basis of Pan-Serbism and the Greater Serbian program to unify the lands that were inhabited by Bulgarians, Macedonians, Albanians, Montenegrins, Bosnians, Hungarians and Croats as part of Greater Serbia. Garašanin's plan also

ation movement to expand Serbia's territory to the South and to the East, thus annexing Bulgarian lands, these "brotherly" ties were severed and the Bulgarian Legion, as well as most Bulgarian revolutionaries, moved to Wallachia. Garašanin's *Načertanije* and Stojan Novaković's theses[6] from the late nineteenth century are still used today in the Bulgarian society as a starting point for explaining the contemporary contradictions between Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia.

Despite this, most Bulgarians view Serbs as "brotherly Slavic and Orthodox people", closest among all other Balkan peoples. It was not a coincidence that Serbia was the first to establish an embassy in Sofia after the Liberation of 1878, even though Bulgaria was still a vassal to the Sultan (Hristov 2003, 113). This was followed by a sudden turn in relations when King Milan attacked the young Bulgarian state in 1885 after the unification of the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia. As Konstantin Irechek concluded about Midwestern Bulgaria:

> Even if certain pro-Serbian sentiments were established after the period of Serbian occupation [1878–1879, when Serbian administration was present in the region], they were completely gone after the Serbo-Bulgarian War of 1885 (Irechek 1899, 501).

The war declared by the Serbian king was not popular even among the soldiers in the Serbian army – at first, many of them perceived the declared mobilisation as a joint march of the Orthodox Serbs and Bulgarians against the Sultan's army, "as the tradition of Christian and Slavic solidarity dictates" (Ilchev 2019a, 574). Very soon, however, fleeing to the highlands around Slivnitsa, they understood the true intentions of their king, who cowardly hid before the battle in the quarters of the General Staff in Pirot (Ilchev 2019a, 579).

The hatred of ordinary Bulgarians was directed against King Milan, but not against Serbs as a people. After the Serbian army's defeat at Slivnitsa in 1885,

included methods for building Serbian influence in the claimed lands. It proposed ways to influence the Croats and Slavic Muslims, whom Garašanin considered "Serbs of the Catholic faith" and "Serbs of the Islamic faith". The document also emphasised the need for cooperation between the Balkan nations and advocated that the Balkans be governed by the nations of the Balkans.

6 Stojan Novaković (1842–1915) was a Serbian politician, historian, diplomat, writer, bibliographer and literary critic. As a Serbian envoy to Constantinople (until 1892) he became the first politician to decide to use the then nascent Macedonian nationalism as an ideology, in order to oppose the strong Bulgarian positions in Macedonia and provide a transitional stage towards the complete Serbisation of the Slavic population in Macedonia; he even became the creator of the pejorative expression "Macedonism" used in Bulgaria.

the Serbian King Milan entered Bulgarian folklore as the "deceitful brother" who "drove a knife in the back" of the Bulgarian army that was stationed in Thrace, expecting an attack by the Turks. "Judas Iscariot", "the envious Cain", "fratricidal king": King Milan "murdered two brotherly peoples" and "spilled brotherly blood", "made two brothers fight, made Serbs and Bulgarians wage war". For the first time, the figure of the "Šumadian swine" – referring to the fratricidal king ("King Milan, you Šumadian swine") – entered Bulgarian mentality, followed by a generalised view of Serbs: "These Serbs, these swine, they started fighting us and didn't know they sinned!" (Anchev 1995, 137). Another example of Serbian deceitfulness was the lack of appreciation for Bulgarian volunteers in the Serbo-Turkish Wars of liberation and independence: "They didn't see on our chests their own medals that they gave us for our heroism!" (Anchev 1995, 137). The malevolent attitude towards Serbia as an enemy of the newly liberated Principality of Bulgaria remained for decades; even until the beginning of the Balkan Wars, the country's military doctrine remained directed towards the West and Serbia was the main potential enemy (Ilchev 2019b, 204). As the famous historian and ethnographer Ivan Shishmanov (1862–1928) summed up on the eve of the First World War, commemorating the Serbian aggression in 1885: "...history is one of the most biased lawyers, who never allows any offense to be forgotten and no transgression to be forgiven" (cf. Ilchev 2019b, 278). I would add – especially in the Balkans!

This image of Serbia and Serbians would later persist in mainstream caricatures created by the famous Bulgarian artists in the so-called "Balkan Parrot" group during and after the Balkan Wars and the First World War.[7] And, whereas in 1915–1916 the dead "Šumadian swine" was hung on the Christmas tree as a decoration or was served on a skewer at the European circus (Gehl, Petrov 2005, 152–189), Serbia was later depicted as an executioner dressed as a Šumadian soldier (Fig. 1) or as a lion tearing Bulgaria and Macedonia apart after the Neuilly Treaty of 1919, which transferred most of Macedonia and the Bulgarian-inhabited "Western Outlands" to the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Petrov, Gehl 2011, 149–240).

In Bulgaria, the annexation of Bulgarian-inhabited border territories to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which happened in 1919, turned the Bosilegrad region and the area between Tsaribrod (presently Dimitrovgrad in Serbia) and Tran into a collective image of the lamented "Western Outlands". Until then, it was common to refer to this area of Bulgaria as backwards, primitively simple and archaic; this, however, was replaced by the heroisation of the "Western Bul-

7 The journal *Balkan Parrot* was a satirical publication with scathing political content, published in Sofia between 1915 and 1927. The editor-in-chief was Sava Zlachkin.

garian children, separated from Mother Bulgaria" (Hristov 2002, 75). Here, Bulgarian propaganda spared no epithets and metaphors. The similarities in dialect and customs between local Bulgarian population and that of the Pirot region and Eastern Serbia as a whole were no longer advantageous; they were presented as a threat that was supposed to keep national conscience even more "awake". Here are some "guidelines" given by the *Zapadno Eho* [Western Echo] newspaper from February 15, 1923, printed in Sofia for refugees from the "Western Outlands":

> Your conquerors [i.e. the Serbs] have the capability and the cunning mastery to use cajoling and convincing while shooting their arrows against the pillars of a nation, against its spirit, so take care and stay extremely cautious. The closeness of our language and the similarity of our faith and customs help them, so you'll need to stay alert (*Zapadno Eho* 1923a, 1).

Fig. 1. *Balkan Parrot* caricature. Issue 12, 1916. The digital collection of "Ivan Vazov" People's Library, city of Plovdiv. https://digital.libplovdiv.com/bg/view/661ce83c9ad490944bb1d25d, accessed October 17, 2024.

The headline of the same issue of the newspaper stated: "Don't attempt to speak Serbian!" (*Zapadno Eho* 1923b; cf. Hristov 2002, 76). The newspaper's pages elaborated on different ways of opposing Serbian assimilation strategies, such as the imposed school celebration (*slava*) on the day of St. Sava instead of the already-popular celebration of Sts Cyril and Methodius as an official celebration in Bulgarian schools (Hristov 2002, 76).

The most sinister portrayal was reserved for the so-called "Serbian occupiers" of Macedonia. In the nineteenth century, Serbian scholars and political leaders recognised that Macedonia had an ethnically Bulgarian face, and even in the Balkan Pact treaties preceding the Balkan Wars, Serbia recognised Macedonia as a predominantly Bulgarian region. At the beginning of the rising Serbian nationalism, serious scholars in Belgrade mocked their overly fanatical colleagues like Miloš Milojević,[8] but eventually the Macedonian fever gripped the Serbian intelligentsia and even scholars like Stojan Novaković and Jovan Cvijić were forced to either remain silent or compromise their integrity, inventing new arguments to support the Serbian nature of the Slavic population in Macedonia (Jezernik 2006, 184).

The revolutionary organisation *Vatreshna Makedonska Revolyucionna Organizaciya* [Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, VMRO], formed to fight for the liberation of Macedonia from Ottoman rule, began a stubborn campaign of terror and guerrilla activity against Serbian authorities in the newly created Vardar Banovina.[9] The slogan *Srbe – na vrbe!* [Serbs on the willows!], coined by the Slovenian Marko Natlačen (1886–1942) and published in his poem *String up the Serbs*, was adopted not only by the Croatian fascist and ultranationalist organization *Ustaše* in the 1940s, but also by VMRO revolutionaries, in its Bulgarian form: *Sărbite – na varbite*! [Serbs on the willows!]. VMRO's attempts and attacks on the new Serbian administration, which at the time considered itself primarily Bulgarian, provoked the authorities to start brutal repressions against the Bulgarian population in the occupied part of Macedonia. This resonated with the Bulgarian society, whose main goal became the revision of the Bucharest (1913) and Neuilly (1919) treaties. The newly adopted Serbian Regulations in Macedonia (September 21, 1913) contained such barbaric norms that the *Srpske novine* [Serbian News] newspaper wrote: "From these laws it can be concluded that all those who live in the conquered territory breathe the deepest hatred towards Serbia" (quoted by Ilchev 2019b, 258–259).

8 The Serbian historian and proponent of the idea of the annexation of the southern Serbian lands to Serbia, Miloš Milojević (1840–1897), wrote the politically engaged work *Journey through the True (Old) Serbia*, printed in three volumes (1871, 1872 and 1887) following his travels through present-day Kosovo, North Macedonia and Albania, then within the borders of the Ottoman Empire. He was one of the ideologists of the Greater Serbian claims to the Slavonic population of Macedonia.

9 Vardar Banovina was an administrative-territorial unit within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, created after the Serbian occupation of present-day North Macedonia during the Balkan Wars and the new territorial division of the Kingdom. As such, it existed from 1929 to 1941.

The Bulgarian society repeatedly discussed an incident that happened in Macedonia in 1912, and was widely covered in the press. It involved the king slapping a seven-year-old girl from Prilep named Vaska Zoycheva (1905–uncertain). During the First Balkan War, King Alexander of Yugoslavia stopped the little girl on the Stone Bridge in Skopje and, leaning over her, asked: Šta *si ti*? [What are you?]. The little girl replied, "Bulgarian", and Alexander, later called "The Unifier", slapped her across the face with his royal palm (Jezernik 2006, 185). He then took out a silver coin and explained to her that it would be hers if she said she was Serbian. Little Vaska continued to repeat that she was Bulgarian and received two more slaps from His Majesty (Ilchev 2019b, 236).

Thus, as early as the mid-nineteenth century and as late as the 1999 NATO bombing campaign, relations between Bulgaria and Serbia/Yugoslavia changed often, varying between "philia" and "phobia", between "warmed" relations and sharp confrontations, between friendship and rivalry. The frequent waves of proclamations of brotherly love between politicians on both sides, often blessed by Slavophilic Russia, crashed in the battle cries of the Serbo-Bulgarian War in 1885, the Balkan Wars and the First World War, as well as during Bulgaria's occupation of Eastern Serbia during the Second World War. The presence of Bulgarian occupation forces in Serbia also cemented the Serbian stereotype that Bulgarians are the neighbours that "always stab Serbia in the back" (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2. Serbian stereotypes about their neighbours. https://www.moddb.com/groups/european-union/images/balkans-according-to-serbia1, accessed February 1, 2025.

After the Second World War, the situation changed in a few years. As a result of cooperation between Bulgarian and Yugoslavian anti-fascist resistance move-

ments, an agreement for friendship, collaboration and mutual help was signed in 1947 in Bled (presently in Slovenia), attempting to pave the way for a federation between Bulgaria and Tito's Yugoslavia (Fig. 3). However, warm relations between Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980) and Georgi Dimitrov (1882–1949) lasted only until the Cominform Bureau's 1948 resolution and Yugoslavia's transformation into a "revisionist country": an enemy of the Soviet Union and the other countries in the socialist bloc. Following Soviet Agitprop,[10] in a matter of days, the propaganda machine of the pro-communist regime in Bulgaria transformed Tito from a "national hero" and "pride of the world communist movement" into a "fascist" and "imperialist agent" with a bloody axe in his hands (Hristov 2017, 285) (Fig. 4). Students were ordered to glue together the 10 pages dedicated to Yugoslavia in their history textbooks, and to put a black border on their edges to resemble an obituary (Ilchev 2019b, 626). Along the border between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, bunkers were built (similar to what was happening in Albania, but not on such a scale), in which border guards awaited a possible Yugoslav invasion. It was not a coincidence that people living under Todor Zhivkov's regime in Bulgaria spoke of "brotherly Algiers and neighbour Yugoslavia" (Pantev 1999b, 9).[11] Meanwhile, in Tito's Yugoslavia the ideological apparatus inflated the fear of external enemies, and "neighbourphobia was used as glue for a country that would sooner or later have to be unglued" (Stefanov 1999, 11, 14). Todor Zhivkov's regime in Bulgaria imposed a complete information blackout about events happening beyond the country's western border. Thus, in the circumstances of official informational taboo, Yugoslavia became a symbol of the West to Bulgarians, an object of "envy for their *chalga*,[12] pub culture and amusements" (Aleksandrov 1999, 8).

10 "Agitation and propaganda" (Agitprop) existed in various institutional forms in the former USSR (ministries, departments of the Central Committee of the Communist Party), and aimed to spread revolutionary ideas, the teachings of Marxism and Leninism; while "agitation" was used to shape the public opinion favourably and incite political unrest in capitalist countries.

11 Todor Zhivkov (1911–1998) was a Bulgarian communist leader who effectively ruled the People's Republic of Bulgaria (PRB) from 1954 to 1989 as General Secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party. He was the second-longest-ruling leader in the Eastern bloc, the longest-ruling leader within the Warsaw Pact, and the longest-ruling non-tsarist ruler in Bulgarian history.

12 *Chalga*, often called pop-folk, short for "popular folk" or ethno-pop, short for "ethnic pop", or Serbian "turbo-folk" is a Balkan pop-folk music genre influenced by Oriental music. Chalga or pop-folk is essentially a dance music genre inspired by folklore, with a mix of Gypsy, Greek, Serbian, Bulgarian, Turkish and Arabic influences. In the former Yugoslavia, it has been a popular genre since the mid-twentieth century, known as "turbo-folk".

Fig. 3. Georgi Dimitrov greets Tito at the Sofia railway station. 24 часа [24 hours]. December 12, 2020. https://www.24chasa.bg/bulgaria/article/9310411, accessed February 9, 2025.

Fig. 4. Portrait of the Yugoslav Hitler. Cartoon by the Soviet cartoonist G. Valka published in the USSR and reprinted in the Bulgarian journal *Българо-съветска дружба* [Bulgarian-Soviet friendship], issue 7, 1951 (cf. Hristov 2017, 285).

During the early 1990s, the initial years of democratic changes in Bulgaria coincided with former Yugoslavia's violent break-up. This put all Bulgarian imagery towards Serbia and Serbs to a serious test (Todorov 2002), and many of the stereotypes from the past were replicated. This period cannot be considered particularly appropriate for building a "normal" image of the Serbs. The main factor in forming this image were armed conflicts which brought out from the depths of history the old views of Serbs as arrogant ultra-nationalists, a brave and stubborn "nation at war"; not a victim. Isolated attempts to differentiate between Serbs and the Serbian state proved futile, and Serbs are still being described "conveniently", i.e. collectively.

The negative image of Serbian nationalism was verbally framed by two public declarations: the *Address* by 89 Bulgarian writers "to the governments of member countries in the United Nations, to politicians and intellectuals from all over the world", signed in November 1991 "regarding Yugoslavia's aggression against the Republic of Croatia", and the *Declaration by Bulgarian intellectuals regarding the war in Yugoslavia*, signed in April 1999. The latter declaration about the military operation in Kosovo stated the following, previously mentioned in the *Address*:

> [...] This war has been going on for too long for us to say only now that we are simply against it. The steps to end it are long overdue for the international community. Prolonged war, even when it seems to us to be locally limited, destroys the foundations of human existence, demoralizes people, destroys social ties and economic networks, fuels xenophobia, and presents the image of the Other as alien and hostile. The ruling Serbian socialists' warring totalitarianism remains unsurpassed because it fully combines the aggressiveness of communist fanaticism and the atrocities of nationalist demagogy [...] It is necessary for the world community to condemn as soon as possible the genocide that Serbian chauvinists are waging [...] Red fascism must be stopped! (*Kultura* 1999. https://newspaper.kultura.bg/media/my_html/2078/c_mih.htm, accessed October 15, 2024).

The attempt by another group of 100 left-oriented intellectuals to support the call from Athens "For peace in the Balkans!" and for an end to NATO's bombardment of Yugoslavia's remnants in 1999 remained isolated by the media. The renowned Bulgarian poet and academician Valeri Petrov sadly remarked:

> If we let ourselves get involved in the aggression against Yugoslavia, this would become the second time we stabbed our neighbours in the back, and new abysses will appear on the Balkans [...] much deeper than the ones from the past that only brought us suffering (http://www.omda.bg/bulg/news/kosovo/peace_2.htm, accessed October 15, 2024).

The Bulgarian society formed the view that Serbians are perpetually in a conflict against somebody: Muslims, Croats, Montenegrins, the EU, USA, NATO, Albania, Bulgaria and so on. If one can speak of a trend, it could mostly be seen in preserving the paradoxical fact that Serbs still have no neutral image: they are either good or bad, depending on the global geopolitical, ideological and social psychological understanding. Oppositions were preserved when building their image: Islam—Slavdom, politically Left—Right as Good—Bad, as "brothers that stab us in the back". The researcher is baffled by this image's remarkable stability over the years. As the historian Andrei Pantev remarked: "There are no sister countries in the Balkans. Differences between states in the Balkans are savagely manifested, even when they are comically minimal and insignificant" (Pantev 1999a, 12).

I would like to conclude by quoting the late Prof. Milcho Lalkov, who taught me a lot about the history of the Balkans:

> We have a bad present and an uncertain future, so we seek comfort in the past. There, we clash with our neighbours because they were great too. In the Balkans we, in an Aesopian style, recreate the Fable in which the wolf meets the lamb and says: "You haven't insulted me, but your father did and I will therefore seek revenge on you". None of us wants to accept the Other as equal, so we use history as a revanche for past defeats and old wounds. When our neighbours outrun us, we look at them with envy and hatred. When we outrun them, we look at them with disdain. Each of us thinks that he has much to take from history at the expense of his neighbours, and nothing to give back (Lalkov 2000, 9).

It is my sincere hope that this will change in the future! So we do not repeat Bay Ganyo's contemptuous remark: "Serbs? We know their tricks!".

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