

Cruising Between the Past and the Future: Danube Travel Writings and the Self- Representation of the Serbian National Movement in the 1860s

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I. Introduction

In 1860, the Austrian Emperor and Hungarian King Francis Joseph issued his famous October Diploma. This legal act ended an over ten year-long period of (neo)absolutism, introduced after the united Austrian-Russian armies defeated the Hungarian revolution of 1848-49, ending an era of Central European national uprisings. The highly oppressive, bureaucratic, and centralised system of governance introduced after 1849 is commonly known as the Bach Era, deriving its name from the Austrian Minister of Interior, Alexander Bach. In the 1850s, the main goal of the Habsburg authorities was the effective elimination of the danger believed to be posed by national movements to the Monarchy. However, this system could not (did not want to) differentiate between the Hungarian “rebels” and those national elites, which, fighting against a unitary Hungarian state, cooperated with the Emperor’s army. The national goals of those elites were (only) formally attained. This happened in the case of the autonomous territory of the Serbian population in the Southern part of the Habsburg-ruled Kingdom of Hungary. In May 1848, after a heated dispute between Lajos Kossuth, leading Hungarian liberal politician and member of the government, and Serbian delegates about the rights of the Serbian population, Orthodox metropolitan Josif Rajačić convoked a Serbian national assembly in the town of Karlowitz (Sremski Karlovci, Karlóca). The gathering proclaimed Serbian Vojvodina an autonomous province of the Habsburg Empire. The government in Pest saw this step as a violation of

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Hungarian sovereignty. The conflict resulted in a bloody (civil) war between Serbian forces from Vojvodina, volunteers from Serbia, and the troops of the Hungarian government on the other.² After the defeat of the Hungarian revolution in the fall of 1849, the Vienna government completely reorganised the Kingdom of Hungary, dividing it into smaller units and centralising its administration. Serbian Vojvodina was reorganised into a newly established administrative unit divided from the Kingdom of Hungary, the Voivodeship of Serbia, and Banat of Temeschwar with the seat in Timișoara.³ The territory of this entity contained the Banat region as well as smaller parts of Bačka and Srymium, giving home to more Romanian than Serbian inhabitants, but excluding important territories with Serbian ethnic majority. Also, its administrative system was completely de-nationalised. German was implemented as the only official language, and the title of the Great Voivode was given to Francis Joseph.⁴ In summary, the newly established territorial unit did not meet Serbian demands. As Svetozar Miletić pointed out in his famous article, the *Hofburg* awarded Serbs with the same absolutist “gift” for their loyalty that Hungarians received as a punishment for their rebellion.⁵

In the context of an overall oppressing absolutism, a new generation of liberal national elites emerged. They were looking for new allies to approach their goals, i.e. to secure collective national rights and territorial

² B. Kovaček, *Текелијанумске историје XIX. века* [Histories of Tekelijanum in the 19th Century] (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1997), 13. S. Nagy, “Forradalom a pétervárad határőrezredben. Cyril Hallavanya alezredez és Dániel Rastich ezredez emlékiratai a délvidéki szerb felkelés kiobbanásáról 1848 május-júliusában” [Revolution in the Border Regiment of Petrovaradin. Memoires of Lieutenant-Colonel Cyril Hallavanya and Colonel Dániel Rastich about the Eruption of the Serbian Uprising in Southern Hungary in May-July 1848], *Fons* 1 (2004): 79-84.

³ Ljubomirka Krkljuš argues that there is not enough evidence to prove that the Voivodeship of Serbia and Banat of Temeschwar had the status of an Austrian Crownland (*Kronland*). The area was rather integrated into the Empire as a special administrative territory (*oblast*). Lj. Krkljuš, О правном положају Срба у Јужној Угарској - Стварност, жеље и контроверзе. [On the Legal Position of Serbs in Southern Hungary - Reality, Aspirations and Controversies], *Зборник Матице српске за историју* -- please translate this title 98. (2018): 52-61.

⁴ D. Mikavica, N. Lemajić, G. Vasin and N. Ninković, *Срби у Хабзбуршкој монархији од 1526. до 1918* [Serbs in the Habsburg Monarchy 1526-1918], Vol. 2. (Novi Sad: Prometej-Radio televizija Vojvodine, 2016), 456-460.

⁵ S. Miletić, “На туџин дан 1860” [Before the Day of Christmas Eve of 1860], *Srbski dnevnik*, December 25, 1860.

autonomy. In the Serbian-Hungarian case, the rapprochement of prominent intellectuals already started in the 1850s, reaching its peak around 1865. As the writer Jovan Đorđević, the founder of the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad (Neusatz, Újvidék) and Belgrade points out, this short period of “friendship” lasted only for a few years. Since 1866, the year of the battle of Königgrätz and the Austrian-Hungarian talks about a possible compromise, the relations between Serbian and Hungarian liberals became more and more hostile.⁶ Nevertheless, the decades before the *Ansgleich* – as István Póth underlines it – can be seen as an exceptionally “fruitful period” of Serbian-Hungarian cooperation, with many parallels, institutional and symbolical interconnections, positive (later also negative) gestures between intellectuals.⁷

This paper discusses travel accounts related to two major urban centres of the Serbian national movement in the Kingdom of Hungary. Pest was at the time an important centre of Serbian elite education and culture, home to the college and student dormitory Tekelijanum and the literary and scholarly society *Matica srpska* [Serbian Matica/Queen Bee] until 1864. Novi Sad, a free royal city in the Southern Bačka region developed rapidly into a centre of Serbian press, education (Orthodox Grammar School), and culture (National Theatre, Reading Circle/Serbian Casino, reorganisation of Matica in Novi Sad).⁸ In 1861-1862 Svetozar Miletić served as mayor of the town. During the 1860s, Serbian liberals organised several mass events both in Novi Sad in Pest. Such occasions included the centenary celebration of the birth of the Serbian-Hungarian benefactor Sava Tekelija in 1861, the relocation of Matica in 1864, as well as regular celebrations on the day of Saint Sava; festivities called “*beseda*” and “*sébo*.” The target audience of these representative

⁶ J. Đorđević, *Српско-маџарско пријатељство. Историјско-политичка студија* [Serbian-Hungarian Friendship. A Historical-Political Study] (Beograd: D. Dimitrijević, 1895), 19-20.

⁷ I. Póth, “A magyar-szerb együttműködés gyümölcsöző évei (1850-1867)” [The Fruitful Years of Serbian-Hungarian Cooperation (1850-1867), *Hungarológiai Közlemények* 52 (1982): 303–14.

⁸ As Kovaček stresses, Miletić intended to establish a mass movement, a wide-reaching network of social and cultural institutions.

V. Kovaček, “Обнова српске читаонице и оснивање Српског народног позорништа” [The Revival of the Serbian Reading Circle and Establishing of the Serbian National Theatre], in *Српска читаоница - Градска библиотека у Новом Саду. Споменница (1845-1995)* – please translate this title, ed. Božidar Kovaček (Novi Sad: Gradska biblioteka, 1996), 137-138.

events was both the Serbian and non-Serbian public inside and outside the Habsburg Empire. The celebrations offered visibility for the main Serbian actors, institutions as well as for the Orthodox Church and popularised national symbols and cults.

Special attention will be paid to the river Danube in the travel writings, being at this point the main transport route between the aforementioned urban centres. Many travel accounts focus on the social life on the steamships, the landscape sliding along, as well as the historical importance of the landmarks. This paper also explores how the organisers of the events included the Danube into their self-representation strategies.

II. National Self-Representation and Travelogues

The period between 1861 and 1867, named after the Minister of Interior and author of a short-lived “moderately liberal” constitution Anton von Schmerling, certainly loosened censorship and made it easier to express national sentiments in the public. In the years of semi-absolutistic governance, potentially subversive political ideas were often “hidden”, expressed in the form of literature, theatre, cultural events. In the early 1860s mass celebrations of “national” saints (Saint Stephen, Saint Cyril and Methodius, Saint Sava) were held, literary works and theatre pieces popularised the mythical medieval past and meritorious personalities were remembered and symbolically entered into the nation’s pantheon. These events served as occasions for mass mobilisation, symbolical and physical gatherings of the members of a modern nation on the streets, both on the scene and in the auditorium of theatres and churches. Cultural events can be thus seen as instruments of mass politics, a widespread phenomenon in the second half of the nineteenth century, notably introduced and analysed by Eric Hobsbawm.⁹

Serbian mass festivities were widely promoted in newspapers, magazines. Brochures and lithographs related to the topic of the events were published. Also, the newly emerging Serbian language press – such as the newspapers *Srbski Dnevnik* [Serbian Journal], *Zastava* [Banner], magazines *Danica* [Morning Star], *Matica* [Queen Bee] – reported extensively on the course of the events. Nonetheless, efforts of self-

⁹ E. Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914,” in *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 263–307.

representation were not only directed towards the Serbian public but were also used as gestures towards other national elites. At these cultural events hosts invited members of their inter-national institutional and personal networks; prominent Hungarian, Croatian, and other Slavic intellectuals. These guests reported on the course of the festivities, memorable speeches, and encounters. Non-Serbian writers sometimes also added their impressions and critical remarks to their accounts; thus positioning themselves towards or against the message of the mass celebrations. These writings often contain remarks about their journeys, the urban and social environment in which the events took place, so one can read them as *travel writings*. Travel writings can be identified as a category, which is certainly wider and more difficult to define than a travelogue. A travel writing speaks about a journey of its author and their (real or fictional) adventures. Such texts are addressed to a wider public; they have to appear to be trustworthy and provoke affective reactions by their readers.¹⁰ Travel writings are by definition subjective, reflecting the author's identity, norms, their understanding of the Self and the Other, the Familiar and the Foreign, Home and Distance. Travel accounts tell a story of a physical journey, but the travelling can also be spiritual; a way to better self-understanding, a journey to God or a ritual of becoming a member of a community.

III. The Danube – Connecting Past and Future

From the 1830s, the steamship had become the most important means of transport on the Danube. Steamers revolutionised not only the transport of goods and people, but also the “mental maps” of their passengers and the wider public as well. As Edit Király points out, the widespread use of steamboats “transformed” the Danube from a physical barrier into a rapid route leading to remote territories, connecting the Habsburg Monarchy with the Ottoman Empire (“Mitteleuropa” and “the East”) both physically and as a “ribbon” of

¹⁰ D. Mašović, “Earliest Travel Writings about Southeast Serbia and Their Characteristics,” in *The Balkans in Travel Writing*, ed. Marija Krivokapić (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 16.

S. Atanasovski, *Mapiranje Stare Srbije: Stopama putopisaca, tragom narodne pesme*. [Mapping Old Serbia: In the Footprints of Travel Writers, Following Folk Songs] (Beograd: Biblioteka XX. vek-Muzikološki institut SANU, 2017): 46.

representations.¹¹ The most important Serbian-language publication of the era, Teodor Pavlović's *Serbski narodni list* [Serbian People's Newspaper], reports about the new means of transport (accompanied by a lithograph of the ship):

Steamboat or steamship is in fact one of the most beautiful and most useful inventions. We are all enchanted when standing on it or watching it passing by from a hill; how it cuts through the Danube and flies like an arrow without any human assistance, making the route from Pest to Zemun so to say in an hour.¹²

The author mentions one of the most important trade routes of the Serbian population in the Habsburg Empire and the autonomous Principality of Serbia, connecting Pest and Zemun (Semlin, Zimony), the border-town to Belgrade. Although this journey was not made in “so to say an hour” but in fact more than 33 hours (according to a speed record in 1831),¹³ but the report for sure shows the enthusiasm about the technical invention and the related new possibilities. The regular transport of steamships on the Danube was made possible as a result of the great undertaking by Count István Széchenyi, which aimed to clear the obstacles to sailing from the Lower Danube (the Iron Gate) and which was supported by the Serbian Prince Miloš Obrenović and the Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II. Already in 1829 the First-Danube-Steamboat-Shipping Company (*Erste Donau-Dampfschiffahrts-Gesellschaft, DDSG*) was established, which during the 1830s extended its routes from Vienna to Galați, the Southeastern exit of the Iron Gate with stops in Pest and Novi Sad. The success of the DDSG was seen as an accomplishment of the Empire, which could profit from the trade on its most important river and tighten relations with the Rumelian part of the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, Széchenyi's modernisation efforts were closely related to Hungarian national interests of the *Vormärz*. The founding of the Óbuda Shipyard by DDSG, the consequent urbanisation of Pest-Buda and last, but not least the building of the Chain Bridge

¹¹ E. Király, *Die Donau ist die Form. Strom-Diskurse in Texten und Bildern des 19. Jahrhunderts*. [The Danube is the Shape. 19th Century Textual and Visual Discourses of the River] (Wien-München: Böhlau, 2017), 162.

¹² “Пароплов (?) парна лађа (?) димшић (?)” [Steamship (?) Steamboat (?) Steamer (?)] *Сербски Народни Лист*, August 5, 1835.

¹³ “Magyar Ország” [Hungary], *Magyar Kurir*, May 3, 1831.

allowing the easier circulation of ships largely contributed to the development of Hungary's prospective capital. In the first decades of its operation, the state granted the DDSG a monopoly on long distance steamship transport. After the restriction was lifted in 1858, both private entrepreneurs and foreign companies had the right to launch steamship lines on the Danube.¹⁴

Travelling by a steamer meant not only that one could reach their destinations with a so far unimaginable speed and comfort, but also the possibility to explore new places and meet new people aboard. Already in the 1830s, a multitude of travelogues were published both in Central and Western Europe, giving practical advice for future travellers, but also reporting on the social life on board, on sights and landmarks, on the economy, politics and the society of the coastal settlements, often through the prism of Orientalism, and thus constructing the "exotic" image of the East. Travelogues (and pieces of visual arts) showed the passing landscape in an aestheticizing and historicizing manner.¹⁵ Constantin Ardeleanu points out that such travelogues evoked a mythicised, idealised past, where different ages appear simultaneously. In that sense the physical journey turns into a time travel where travellers could "mentally" meet a series of historical personalities from Emperor Augustus to Napoleon.¹⁶ The historical landmarks or anecdotes were juxtaposed with the bright future, the technical and social "progress" the steamship symbolised. Ardeleanu pays specific attention to the social life on board, which he defines as "steamboat sociality" structured by the places on the ship; the saloon (serving as men's bedroom), the deck used by lower social classes etc. The life on the steamboat, the relatively long togetherness resulted in long talks, games, encounters with a great diversity of people.¹⁷ These cosmopolitan experiences were included in the published travel writings.

In the 1860s, after the liberalisation of the sector, DDSG still dominated fluvial transport. More than 30 years after the beginning of

¹⁴ J. Pásztor, "A dunai gőzhajózás története" [History of Steamboat Transport on the Danube], *Közlekedéstudományi Szemle* 1 (1955): 24–28.

¹⁵ E. Király, *Die Donau*, 197.

¹⁶ C. Ardeleanu, "Steamboat Sociality" along the Danube and the Black Sea (mid-1830s–mid-1850s)," *Journal of Transport History*, (2000) <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0022526620908258>. (accessed 20. April, 2020): 15.

¹⁷ Ardeleanu, "Steamboat Sociality," 13-14.

regular transport from Vienna to the Black Sea, the novelty of cruising was fading, however, travel writings were still published. The 1860s also marked the beginnings of mass tourism by steamship. For instance, the entrepreneur János (Johann) Zeilinger, responsible for the catering services of DDSG announced a tourist excursion (*kéjútazás*) on the Lower Danube until Orschowa (Oršava, Orsova) and the spa in Mehadia. The five-day journey included a visit to Belgrade (which was eventually cancelled because of the unrests between the Serbian and the Ottoman population of the city), natural and historical sights, such as the Iron Gate (Đerdap), a meadow where the lost Hungarian crown jewels were found, Novi Sad and Petrovaradin.¹⁸ The list of these sights shows the importance of places, which could be related to the stories, myths and anecdotes of the (Hungarian) national past.

This decade is also characterised by the active use of the steamship in Serbian self-representation. As formerly mentioned, the steamboat was associated with technical and social progress, so it was used at Serbian festivities in the 1860s, as a symbol of national modernisation. This symbolism was clearly expressed in May 1864 as after more than a decade of bureaucratic fight the government allowed the reorganisation of the literary and scholarly society Matica srpska. The institution symbolically “moved” from Pest to Novi Sad. By this move, the society left behind Pest and the outdated cultural policies connected to this city (such as the old Serbian orthography) and departed into its future in the town, which was presented as the (new) urban centre of the Serbian national movement. This journey took part on the steamship “*Napredak*” (Progress), provided for this occasion by the wholesaler Jovan Foršković. The steamer transported the documentation of Matica and its collection of books and artefacts to Novi Sad, where it was greeted with salutes (gunshots), and then by a liturgy in the Orthodox cathedral and a ceremonial assembly at the episcopal seat.¹⁹ Steamers, besides other means of transport and communication – for instance, messages sent by telegram and solemnly read on the festivities – had a vital role in Serbian nation-building, as well as in bringing parts of a divided nation (living in the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, Serbia or in the diaspora) and of its “allies” together to celebrate, or to discuss their common future. Many

¹⁸ *Sürgöny*, July 2, 1862.

¹⁹ Ž. Milisavac, *Матича српска 1826-1964* [Matica srpska 1826-1964] (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1965), 90.

of the important mass festivities of these years took place in Novi Sad; the centenary and millenary celebrations of Sava Tekelija in 1861, that of St. Cyril and Methodius in 1863, a theatre festival at the Serbian National Theatre in honour of William Shakespeare in 1864 and the constitutive meeting of the liberal all-Serbian mass organisation United Serbian Youth in 1866. An essential part of these events was the reception of distinguished guests to the port of Novi Sad. Arriving both upstream (from Serbia) and downstream (from central Hungary, Croatia and Slavonia, as well as Western Europe), prominent guests were given a warm and solemn reception by Serbian notabilities and a crowd, shouting *živio*, sometimes *éjjen* (hurray) and an orchestra playing Serbian national songs. An important goal of these efforts of self-representation was to present Novi Sad as a national urban centre (“Serbian Athens”²⁰), a home of Serbs arriving from all directions. In the last part of the essay, I will analyse a case study related to a national festivity in Novi Sad, the centenary of Sava Tekelija on the 29th of August 1861.

IV. Mass Celebration in the “Serbian Athens”: The Centenary of Sava Tekelija

Sava Popović Tekelija (in Hungarian Tököly Száva; 1761-1842) was a prominent Serbian lawyer, writer, benefactor and Hungarian nobleman. In the 19th century, he took an active part in Serbian public life, generally advocating a Hungarian-Serbian political alliance and speaking up against the language reform proposed by Vuk Karadžić. In 1838, a critical moment in Matica srpska’s existence, he enabled the survival of the society with a generous donation. He also established the student dormitory Tekelijanum (*Tökölyanum*) in the centre of Pest offering poor and talented high school and university students free accommodation and the possibility to be educated in their mother tongue. With Tekelijanum, Tekelija wanted to help in creating a Serbian centre in the heart of Hungary, which gave home to a Serbian public library, museum objects, the seat of Matica and the editorial boards of various Serbian newspapers although the establishing of a Serbian printing shop in Tekelijanum was not allowed. Although the Serbian national movement

²⁰ According to an anecdote, a local craftsman called Novi Sad for the first time “Serbian Athens” Lj. Lotić, *Споменица новосадске трговачке омладине*. [Memorial Book of the Novi Sad Craftmen’s Youth] (Novi Sad, 1933), 110.

of the 1860s made many of his political points obsolete decades before he was celebrated year by year for his generosity and donations. His epithets were the “Great Benefactor” (*veliki dobrotvor*) and the “Father” of Serbian pupils or Serbian youth. The reason for the “popularity” of Tekelija’s cult at the beginning of the 1860s was in fact the rapprochement between Serbian and Hungarian liberals. The memory of Tekelija in fact was suitable to become the basis of a Serbian-Hungarian cult. As a Serb and a *Hungarus* nobleman he did not support Serbian territorial claims in Hungary and supported “Hungarian” causes; he made a donation of 2000 Forints to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and 1000 Forints to the Debrecen Reformed College.²¹

The centenary of Tekelija’s birth gave Serbian national movement the opportunity to present its cultural and educational institutions to the broader, non-Serbian public, to promote their national goals and demonstrate the recent Serbian-Hungarian alliance and friendship. The celebration was inspired by the centenary of the Hungarian poet and language reformer Ferenc Kazinczy in Pest and his home village Széphalom in 1859. Such literary centenaries are part of a tradition of European Romanticism. These occasions served as the acknowledgement of the immortal deeds of the nation’s great personalities (“national saints” as Thomas Carlyle stresses), where the nations paid their respect to these meritorious persons, symbolically entering them into the national Pantheon (pantheonization).²²

The centenary celebration was initiated by the editor of the newspaper *Srbski dnevnik*, Jovan Đorđević, who also acted as the main organiser (and the director of the recently established Serbian National Theatre).²³ The main institutional organiser of the centenary was *Matica srpska*. During the preparations in 1861, organisers decided to host the event in Novi Sad. Although Tekelija did not live or work in Novi Sad for a longer time, they considered this place being a centre of the liberal movement and many of the related institutions the most fitting to

²¹ B. Kovaček, *Текелијајугословенске историје*, 5-11.

²² K. Keserű, “A kultusz köztes helye. Kazinczy magyarországi kultusza” [The Intermediary Position of the Cult. Kazinczy’s Cult in Hungary], in *Tények és legendák – tárgyak és ereklyék*, ed. Zs. Kalla. (Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, 1990): 35-38. M. Dović and J. K. Helgason, *National Poets, Cultural Saints: Canonization and Commemorative Cults of Writers in Europe* (Brill: Leiden, 2006): 1-11.

²³ *Србски дневник*, November 1, 1859.

represent Serbian culture. Besides Jovan Đorđević the newly elected mayor of Novi Sad, Svetozar Miletić acted as the host of the celebration. One should also mention the key role of the Orthodox bishop of Bačka, Platon Atanacković. Recently revived or established Serbian associations, the Serbian National Theatre, the Orthodox Gymnasium and the Serbian Reading Circle (Casino) took part in the celebrations as well. While the organisation and the course of the event was dominated by a new generation of liberal intellectuals the conservative side of Serbian politics (Đorđe Stratimirović, Petar Čarnojević) was represented as well.

Srbski dnevnik, the main Serbian newspaper of the time, extensively reported about the celebrations, Hungarian, Croatian, Slovak and Czech periodicals published longer or shorter summaries of the events. Important details of the celebrations are presented in the memoirs of Đorđe Stratimirović²⁴ and Aca Popović Zub.²⁵ Historian Božidar Kovaček provides a substantial analysis of the events in his monography about Tekelijanum and the memory of Tekelija. Relying on these primary and secondary sources, I will provide a short description of the event and focus on some of its characteristics.

The representative events took place on the 29th of August although some guests had already arrived days earlier and stayed till later in the town. The delegations arrived by steamboat and were solemnly welcomed at the pier. Two distinguished guests were awarded with the specific honour of a representative ride or walk to the town centre. The merchant Ilija Kolarac, who created a literary foundation in Belgrade and also donated for a prospective Law Academy in Novi Sad arrived already on the 28th with the Belgrade delegation. To thank for his generosity Miletić took Kolarac for a ride around the town.²⁶ The steamboat from Pest arrived the day after, in the morning of the celebration. From the travellers, Petar Čarnojević was escorted by the celebrating mass to the town. Čarnojević was the former royal commissioner of Southern Hungary in 1848, and he, as a Serb, took part in the work of the

²⁴ G. von Stratimirović, *Was ich erlebte; Erinnerungen von General von Stratimirović* (Wien-Leipzig: W. Braumüller, 1911), 133-134.

²⁵ A. Popović Zub, *Успомене II*. [Memoires II.] (Budim-Pešta: Mađarska kraljevska sveučilišna knjigopечатnja, 1893)

²⁶ *Србски дневник* August 16, 1861.

Hungarian opposition in the Parliament. In summary, the arrival by steamboat was an important representative part of the celebration.²⁷

Ján Francisci, a Slovak writer and journalist visiting wrote about a “people’s festivity in the whole sense of the word.”²⁸ In fact, the centenary included many mass spectacles; torch processions and open-air music and performances of the National Theatre. Novi Sad was illuminated in the evening, main buildings (including the town hall) decorated with the Serbian national flag. At the main square, next to the Roman Catholic church and the town hall, a pyramid-shaped monument was erected with the depiction of Tekelija. The programme of the day started in the Orthodox Cathedral with a liturgy celebrated by Bishop Atanacković and by the local cleric Andrija Monašević. The very pantheonization of Tekelija took place in the courtyard of the town hall, where the benefactor’s painting was unveiled, the choir sang the Hymn of Saint Sava, Aleksandar Sandić declaimed Damjan Pavlović’s poem about Tekelija and Jovan Subotić appraised him in a speech. A festive lunch for 154 guests was prepared in the guesthouse “Sun,” where all distinguished guests were giving speeches in the spirit of the Hungarian-Serbian and of the Slavic friendship and brotherhood. In this moment, and in the spirit of the Great Benefactor Tekelija donations were made for the establishment of a Serbian Law Academy in Novi Sad. The day ended with a torch procession and the performances of the Serbian National Theatre.²⁹

V. Travelling Abroad or Finding a New Home? – The Centenary of Sava Tekelija in Writings of Danube Travellers

As previously mentioned, prominent guests from distant cities arrived by steamboat at the centenary of Sava Tekelija. In their reports they provided longer or shorter descriptions of the journey itself, the arrival to Novi Sad, historical and natural landmarks. In the following part, three texts will be analysed, written by authors travelling on the same boat starting from Pest via Vukovar, and arriving at Novi Sad in the morning of the 29th of August. This ship carried Serbian, Hungarian, and Croatian

²⁷ M. Jókai, “A Tököli-emlékünnepe Újvidéken.” [The Tököli Memorial Celebration in Novi Sad] *Vasárnapi Újság*, September 8, 1861, 428.

²⁸ *Pešťbudínske vedomosti*, September 6, 1861.

²⁹ *Србски дневник*, August 18, 1861.

notabilities to the celebration. Hungarian journalist György Urházy published his report on the events in the newspaper *Magyar Sajtó* [Hungarian Press].³⁰ Mór Jókai, one of the most popular writers of the Hungarian romanticism described the journey in the popular weekly illustrated magazine *Vasárnapi Ujság* [Sunday Paper].³¹ The account by the Zagreb-based Croatian writer and journalist Janko Jurković was first published in the periodical *Naše Gore list* [Our Mountains], and later an extended version came out in *Pozor* [Attention]³², a Zagreb newspaper being close to the People's Party, which was advocating a Serbian-Croatian political alliance. The title of Jurković's account "Microscopic travel notes from Zagreb to Novi Sad", already shows that the author puts his excursion to Novi Sad in a wider perspective of an adventurous journey through his homeland, Croatia and Slavonia travelling alone, with strangers and with his wife, using various means of transport. In Vukovar he joined the delegation from Zagreb. Novi Sad was the easternmost point of his journey, from where he returned by steamboat to Vukovar.

Because of the many stops on the way, the number of people travelling to Novi Sad grew to a "logarithm," as Jókai objected. Jurković in Vukovar boarded an already extremely crowded ship.

There was no mention of sleep, on the principle of "prior tempore, potior iure," which is used on the ships and in taverns without any reason or mercy, all the places around us were already taken, and nobody would consider giving up their places, unless the ship started burning or sinking. Thus, we began having various conversations, watering our dry throats with wine or tea, until eventually, as we were unable to resist the sleep, we found ourselves on the ground, on the roof and in all the corners of the ship.³³

In his critical account, Jókai uses the journey to become acquainted with different parties in Serbian politics.

³⁰ Gy. Urházy, "Tököly-ünnep Ujvidéken" [Celebration of Tököly in Novi Sad], *Magyar Sajtó* (September 3, 1861).

³¹ M. Jókai, "A Tököli-émlékünnepe," 428-429.

³² J. Jurković, "Mikroskopične crtice putopisne od Zagreba do Novoga-Sada" [Microscopic Travel Notes from Zagreb to Novi Sad], *Pozor* (June 15-22, 1862).

³³ J. Jurković, "Mikroskopične crtice," *Pozor* (June 18, 1862): 515.

The notabilities of the Serbian people of every political colour were present: those who go sleeping and get up in the direction of Vienna, Pest or Belgrade.³⁴

He gives a sarcastic compilation of the discussions he witnessed about some political options obviously unacceptable for him, such as: who the Serbian Vojvoda should be and what the appropriate way of appointing him was, or who was going to sit in the *Reichsrat* in Vienna (instead of the Parliament in Pest). Both Jókai and Urházy mention their encounter on board with Petar Čarnojević and Đorđe Stratimirović, describing them as friendly, moderate politicians.

Arriving at Novi Sad, both Hungarian travellers were feeling a bit strange in the town. They were looking for familiar faces, Hungarian symbols, and songs. Jókai stresses the importance of the Hungarian flag, by telling an anecdote about Čarnojević, who insisted on pinning the tricolour at one of his earlier visits (meaning there was no such flag there).³⁵ Urházy writes about the arrival to Novi Sad, highlighting a Hungarian national song played by the orchestra. The fortress of the neighbouring Petrovaradin echoes the march. The fortification appears here as a national symbol, the witness of Hungarian history.

The Serbian march was followed by the Rákoczy march and the cliffs of Petrovaradin mightily echoed our national march shaking hearts and minds.³⁶

Besides reporting on the event and praising the importance of Tekelija for the Serbian and Hungarian people, Jókai also describes Novi Sad as a politically and ethnically diverse town, mentioning both the unwillingness of the local Germans to take part in the celebrations and the hardships the (Hungarian) Reformed Church was facing in building its church. Already during the festive lunch the author left Novi Sad to visit Patriarch Rajačić in Karlowitz, who could not attend the celebrations because of his illness. In the end, Jókai left by coach to Pest via the Banat region, which was, contrary to the Danube cruise, a long and tiresome journey making the author sick. To sum up the political message of his article (which did not mention either Miletić, or

³⁴ M. Jókai, "A Tököli-émlékünnp," 428.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, 428.

³⁶ Gy. Urházy, "Tököly-ünnp."

Dorđević), Jókai gives a strong opinion on the „two sides” of Serbian politics, in fact sharply condemning any idea of territorial autonomy.

We got to know something, about which we might be in doubts. Two parties are recognisable; one always feels well under the Hungarian constitution and the autonomy of the counties, which is eager to make sacrifices for the homeland but is modest in its claims, which was and is ours: has confidence in us and loves us: - and another one wishing privileges rather than equality. (...) We offer rights and justice for everyone and although it may take some time, everyone will join us.³⁷

Jókai and Urházy write about their journey to Novi Sad as an excursion into a rather unknown, foreign place. Jurković is in contrary telling the story of getting to know the town, meeting new friends, and, at the end, finding home in a distant place. Although he arrived in the early morning hours to Novi Sad and did not find any accommodation, a friendly stranger at the town hall invited him to his house. Referring to the talks the guests from Pest gave at the festive lunch, he expressed sceptical thoughts about the Hungarian intentions:

The mask of brotherhood and equal rights still hid the hegemony of the ruling tribe over its slaves, which had since then become visible for some.³⁸

Jurković stayed in Novi Sad a few more days. His hosts showed him the town, which he describes as a dynamically growing nice place. He went to the theatre and a ball, which he interpreted as an event, where people of different ages, social class and clothing (“*excluding some exotic people*”)³⁹ were connected by the common language. These thoughts reflect the ideas of Slavic reciprocity or the contemporary Yugoslav idea, which was not in the focus of the celebrations but still appears at and around the centenary event.

³⁷ M. Jókai, “A Tököli-émlékünnepe,” 429.

³⁸ J. Jurković, “Mikroskopične crtice,” 516.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, 516.

VI. Conclusion

This study analysed one of the most important Serbian mass festivals of the 1860s in Novi Sad through the lens of travellers and prominent guests arriving from Pest and Zagreb. Travel writings show that the steamboat ride and the arrival was an important part of these representative events. The ride on the Danube gave these notabilities the possibility to get to know people of different political backgrounds, persons they never had the opportunity – maybe even did not want – to meet. Informal talks on board were at least as important for political negotiations between national elites as the formal part of the celebration. The analysed travel writings included not only the description of the events in Novi Sad but also allowed for the reframing of the narrative that the (majority of the) organisers wanted to communicate the wider public. In the context of the restrained political and press freedoms of the 1860s, mass events were not “only” of cultural importance. They expressed clear political ideas and the analysed travel writings can be seen as answers to these messages, where authors express their opinion through travel experiences.

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