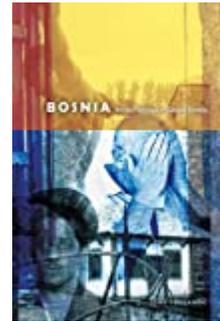
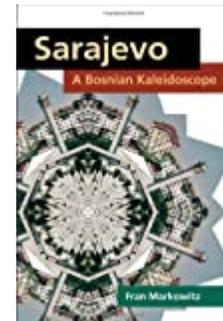




**Tony Fabijančić.** *Bosnia: In the Footsteps of Gavrilo Princip.* Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2010. 264 pp. \$29.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-88864-519-7.



**Fran Markowitz.** *Sarajevo: A Bosnian Kaleidoscope.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010. xii + 220 pp. \$70.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-252-03526-5; \$25.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-252-07713-5.



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## Chasing the Balkan Ghosts

On the eve of the apprehension of Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić, the two main Bosnian Serb leaders from the last Balkan War, two new books have been published with a special emphasis on the legacy of the recent military conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Both authors—Tony Fabijančić and Fran Markowitz—build their stories on the vast research activities and rich personal experience in the country itself. Whereas Fabijančić, a son of a Croatian immigrant

and currently associate professor of English at Memorial University in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, describes his book as merely a “travel itinerary” without scholarly ambitions (p. xiii), Markowitz, professor of cultural anthropology at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, quotes a long list of institutional projects as the framework for “a happy and a sad tale about the contemporary nation” (p. 14). In both cases, the capital city Sarajevo is described as a crossroads of many tragic historic de-

velopments, from the times of the Ottoman Empire via Austria-Hungary to Yugoslavia and its collapse.

In the eyes of the Great Powers, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Bosnia and Herzegovina remained the key to controlling the Balkan Peninsula. The two provinces on the margins of the large Ottoman Empire became one of the main questions of international politics after the uprising in 1875. Although the Berlin Congress of 1878 ended the conflict with the Austro-Hungarian occupation, it erupted again with the growing ambitions of the Habsburg diplomacy to annex the two provinces. As long as the Kingdom of Serbia was under the rule of the Austrophile Obrenović dynasty, Austria-Hungary could still successfully defend its acquisitions and position in the Balkans. But when in 1903 the throne was assumed by the Karađorđević dynasty, this led to a significant shift in Serbian policy vis-à-vis the Habsburg Monarchy. Serbia demanded a free passage toward the sea, as well as the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was the very heart of the Serbian nation, as the Serbian geographer Jovan Cvijić wrote in his famous brochure in 1909.[1] But the demand that the Habsburg Monarchy denounce Bosnia and Herzegovina did not merely imply that it was to relinquish the two provinces—it was to have much broader consequences. According to Solomon Wank, the secession of the two Southern Slav lands would compromise not only the political ascendancy of Austria-Hungary in the Balkans, but also its very status of a Great Power. Playing the traditional role of a Great Power was precisely one of the most important arguments for the existence of the multinational empire, whereas passive foreign policy would be the sign of weakness to all those national leaders who strove to emancipate from authority in Vienna or in Budapest.[2] The conflict between Serbia and the monarchy in the Balkans was not confined to the battle of power between the diplomacies of the two states. The Kingdom of Serbia declared itself the Southern Slav Piedmont, which, in the light of a vast number of Southern Slavs in Austria-Hungary, inevitably bore significant consequences for the political situation in the monarchy itself. Serbian statesmen artfully demonstrated to the world that they demanded nothing more than a faithful realization of the principle of the right to national self-determination for their unredeemed brothers in Austria-Hungary. On account of the multitude of its ethnic problems, Serbian politicians described the Danube Monarchy as politically reminiscent of Dante's inferno.[3]

With the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908, the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister, Baron Alois

Lexa von Aehrenthal, provided undisputable proof that the Habsburg Monarchy—already written off by many—was still capable of pursuing the policy becoming of a Great Power, albeit only in the Balkans. But it would be erroneous to think that such a demonstration of power by Austro-Hungarian diplomacy was a purpose in itself. The annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina was an integral part of long-term plans on the basis of which Aehrenthal tried to consolidate the Habsburg Monarchy in order to prevent the Kingdom of Serbia from asserting its influence in the Balkans and to erect a dam against the advancement of the Greater Serbian idea. Although the Annexation Crisis could not spoil the start of Aehrenthal's great game, it was just a prelude to a much more dangerous process led by different groups of Serbian nationalists, encouraged decisively by the success of the Serbian Army in the two Balkan Wars of 1912–13. Gavrilo Princip—the main protagonist of Fabijan's book—became the most famous of them.

Perhaps the most famous assassin of all times, Princip owes his popularity to the prominence of his victim—archduke and heir apparent to the Austrian and Hungarian thrones, Francis Ferdinand. On the eve of WWI, the Habsburg heir had gathered around him a group of prominent personalities, also called the Belvedere Circle after his residence. Although it comprised high military officers, of whom the chief of the general staff, Baron Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, was one of his main advisers, it would be erroneous to consider Francis Ferdinand as the leader of the Viennese war party. The archduke was not a great pacifist, as made quite evident from his bold plans to build up the Austro-Hungarian navy. But Francis Ferdinand was well aware of how vulnerable the Habsburg Monarchy was due to the unsolved internal political conflicts, and as long as these were not settled, the monarchy was not able to conduct a more engaged policy in the Balkans. Nevertheless, a legend spread across the Serbian political circles before WWI about Francis Ferdinand as the leader of a Viennese war party that later served to justify his assassination. But the gravest menace for Serbia did not come from Conrad's rattling guns. The real power of the heir's apparent circle was hidden in its nationalistic reform plans on the creation of the Southern Slav unit within the monarchy, which could seriously undermine the aspirations to create a Greater Serbia.[4] The majority of historians deny his inclination toward nationalism and ascribe to him more aggressive tendencies. The most prominent among them was Vladimir Dedijer, mostly known as biographer of Josip Broz Tito, but also an author of the book *The Road*

to *Sarajevo* (1966), a standard work that obviously served as a main source of inspiration to Fabijan's book.

From the testimonies of Princip and his fellow conspirators who assassinated Francis Ferdinand on June 28, 1914, in Sarajevo, we may draw two main reasons as to why the heir to the throne was selected as their target. On the one hand, the Habsburg archduke was believed to lead his own war party in Vienna. So, at the Sarajevo trial in October 1914, Nedjeljko Čabrinović stated as the motive for the assassination his conviction that Francis Ferdinand was at the head of "some clique that calls itself a war party" and "harboured aspirations to conquer Serbia and other Slav lands." [5] On the other hand, the second motive for the heir's apparent liquidation was to be sought in the attempt to thwart the realization of his reform plans, which would have been very detrimental to the interests of the Serbian state. Čabrinović revealed to the judges about having read somewhere that Francis Ferdinand had entertained the idea of an Austrian federation to which the monarchy would have annexed Serbia and Montenegro. The assassins thus thought that the archduke had attempted to federalize the monarchy and then incorporate both Serbian states into the new structure. They were also familiar with his protective stance toward the Croats. Ivo Kranjčević, another accused at the Sarajevo trial, repeatedly claimed that Francis Ferdinand was "a friend of the Croats" and "a friend of all Slavs." [6]

Although Fabijan's book does not explore the personality of the Sarajevo victim in detail, in his book we can still find yet further proof of the above mentioned thesis in the testimony of the notorious Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijević Apis, leader of the conspiratorial Black Hand organization. To justify the terrorist methods of his organization, he described Francis Ferdinand with the following words: "By uniting South Slavs of the Monarchy under a uniform, co-ordinated administration [trialism], the archduke might halt erosion of Austrian power and envelop Serbia" (p. 62). Princip was not destined to become Black Hand's member: he wanted to join though, but being "too small and too weak," he was rejected (p. 57). Instead of returning to normal life, Princip became even more determined to become famous for his "patriotic deeds"—his journey toward Sarajevo began. The young assassins were swayed by anti-Habsburg propaganda, and some of them admitted later during the Sarajevo process that "they didn't know of the archduke's opposition to war, his condemnation of Budapest's treatment of the Croats, and his dabbling with the idea of trialism" (p. 166).

Accompanied by his father, in 2005 and 2006, Fabijan's book traveled all over ex-Yugoslavia in order to chase "the ghost of Gavrilo Princip": from the former Krajina enclave of the Croatian Serbs to the capital of Serbia Belgrade, from Višegrad and Foča to Doboj, Tuzla, and Herzegovina. He visited Sarajevo, the scene of the 1914 crime, twice, concluding his historical journey at Theresienstadt, the end station of the convicted assassin. Fabijan's book met a number of interesting characters of different ethnic origins, cultures, and religions; therefore, he heard as many different opinions about the historical role of Princip. He was "an anti-Habsburg revolutionary hero, a martyr for Bosnian nationhood, a naïve adolescent with noble ideals, a Serbian nationalist, and, since the bloody course of the war in the 1990s, if not before, a Serbian terrorist (at least from the point of view of Bosnian Croats and Muslims)" (p. xxiv). Be as it may, the consequences of his act of violence undoubtedly changed world history.

In 1914, not only Austria-Hungary and Serbia failed an exam, but also the entire "Concert of Europe," which did not know or was not able to find a solution for a peaceful settlement of the tensions that occurred after the assassination of Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo. The archduke's death became a precursor to the biggest slaughter the world had seen. Princip with his achievement became a part of the myth about the forming of a new Yugoslav country and assumed a privileged position in the Yugoslav historiography. He remained a role model for numerous Serbian nationalists. Upon the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Karadžević devoted to him a pathetic poem, which includes the following verse: "Oh, Soul, shoot at the emperor, sharpen the supreme sense! Shoot at the strong knee of the era. May the time kneel, may the empires jumble their themes, may Vienna grow dumb, may the sky grow dumb!" [7] An older Serb, whom Fabijan's book met during his visit to Sarajevo's Lav Cemetery in 2006, assured him "that Princip's generation of young Bosnians was the best the country ever saw" (p. 161). But Princip was simply written off as the Serbian version of "Bin Laden" by a Muslim caretaker of the mosque in the city of Mostar (p. 119).

At the Paris Peace Conference of 1919-20, the fact that during the First World War Serbia heroically resisted the armies of the Central Powers increased the sympathies of the winning Great Powers' diplomats toward the "Yugoslav Piedmont." Southern Slav political elites from the ruined Habsburg Monarchy decided to unite with Serbia and choose the Karađorđević family as their new dynasty. This additionally reinforced Serbian polit-

ical influence in the entire region. After that, Yugoslavia was for almost two decades the key ally of France in the Balkans. This provided Belgrade ruling circles with a free hand in the regulation of internal political problems, which were quite numerous. This was only to a certain extent due to national, religious, and cultural diversity, of which Sarajevo was again the main and perhaps best-known example. It was also due to the fact that, within Yugoslavia, two different concepts of the state organization had clashed: centralism and federalism. In addition, conflicts between the former Habsburg (before that mainly Western Roman) and Ottoman (before that Byzantine) part of the country, which was now common, presented a tough task for the governing elites who only reached a temporary solution as late as the eve of the Second World War. This solution provided Croats with a great deal of autonomy. However, Adolf Hitler's devastating attack in 1941 proved that this was only a fragile truce between Serbian and Croatian political elites, who had not been able to reach uniformity, not even regarding on how to effectively protect the territorial integrity of the country. In the shadow of the Third Reich, Bosnia and Herzegovina witnessed a number of bloody interethnic massacres that took thousands and thousands of innocent civilians' lives. After the Second World War, Tito's Yugoslavia remained on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain. However, at least in one area, Tito's charm contributed to a bigger consolidation of the country than his predecessors, the Karađorđević dynasty, managed to achieve: a federalization of the state. For quite some decades, the communist ideology prevailed over former national conflicts and it seemed as though Tito's concept of brotherhood and unity was going to neutralize even the old Croatian-Serbian conflicts. Tito's death shattered this illusion as well. In the late 1980s, with the rise of Slobodan Milošević, who openly flirted with traditional territorial plans of Greater Serbia while defending a communist posture, the revived national conflicts triggered yet another Balkan War.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, the federal republic, which was during the times of Tito's Yugoslavia the role model of those defending brotherhood and unity, turned into the scene of the most horrifying crimes in Europe since the Second World War. In Markowitz's book we can observe how that abrupt change influenced the everyday lives of citizens of Sarajevo. According to her own definition, her book strives to illuminate the competing yet dialectically engaged stances of tolerance, cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, and hostility, ethnic exclusivity, nationalism, and their ever-changing results specific

to the reconfiguration of geographies, polities, and identities that, for lack of better names, we call postwar Sarajevo and post-Dayton Bosnia-Herzegovina (p. 14).

Statistics are certainly a strong point of Markowitz's study, showing the changing ethnic structures before and after the last military conflict, or better said, before and after the barbaric siege of Sarajevo which lasted for years. The most striking fact of the comparative analysis of the postwar statistics and the last Yugoslav census in 1991 is very well expressed in one of the chapter titles of Markowitz's book: "Where Have All the Yugoslavs, Slovenes and Gypsies Gone?" In comparison to the 1991 census when twenty-five (!) categories were used to count the population on the basis of nationality, in 2002 the authorities placed its citizens into only three named categories: Bosniacs, Croats, and Serbs (p. 82). It is understandable that "the Yugoslavs" (in 1991 their number was estimated at 242,682) after the collapse of Yugoslavia were not counted any more, but what happened to the others? Indeed, what happened to the 10,071 Montenegrins, the 4,925 Albanians, the 3,929 Ukrainians, the 2,190 Slovenes, the 893 Italians, and the 590 Czechs? Markowitz tries to describe everyday experiences, worries, and plans of the members of the so-called *Ostali*-group in dealing with the post-Dayton reality in Sarajevo. Curiously enough, even the Jewish community, regarded for centuries as a symbol of tolerant and multicultural character of Sarajevo, lost its category in the new census. The counting methods of the new authorities are revealed in the following story of Asja M.: "My friend's mother answered the question about national belonging by saying, 'I am a Czech.' The interviewer told her, 'I have no Czechs on my list. Czechs are Catholic. I'll put you down as a Croat'" (p. 86).

Apart from interesting statistics, what is even more instructive are the results of Markowitz's many interviews with citizens of different origins which she has conducted since 1982 when she first set foot in Yugoslavia as the accompanying spouse of an American Fulbright doctoral student. In Markowitz's own words, she wrote all those personal stories "in the spirit of getting things right"; therefore, she does not merely report facts on the ground, but also listens to, takes seriously, and engages "with the many conflicting interpretations of what those facts mean for the variously self-defined Sarajevans who enliven their city as they live in it" (p. 25). One of the most touching stories in Markowitz's book is undoubtedly the description of the members of the Sarajevo Jewish community who are torn between their two homelands. Markowitz is even capable of describing Sarajevo

human destinies through its impressive historical buildings, such as *Vijećnica*, the city hall built in 1896 by the Austrians in the neo-Moorish style. By erecting such buildings that evoked the East, the Habsburg architects obviously wanted to pay homage to Islam brought to Bosnia by the Ottoman Turks (p. 41). When I visited Sarajevo back in 2004, I was told by my Bosnian colleagues that during the war especially the Old Austrian buildings had proved to be the most resistant to the Serbian bomb shelling.

Reading the books of Fabijančić and Markovitz, we cannot avoid the impression that although the Balkan Wars are finally over, their impact on the everyday lives of people of Bosnia and Herzegovina will last for centuries. Nevertheless, most of them would like to forget what happened and go on with their lives, as the current owner of the house in Sarajevo where Princip had masterminded his plot against the Habsburg archduke told his (unwanted) visitor Fabijančić: "But who cares what happened a hundred years ago? It's not something that concerns us. Plus, there's too much history in this country anyway" (p. 38).

## Notes

[1]. Jovan Cvijić, *L'annexion de la Bosnie et la question serbe* (Paris: Hachette, 1909), 17.

[2]. Solomon Wank, "Some Reflections on the Habsburg Empire and Its Legacy in the Nationalities Question," *Austrian History Yearbook* 28 (1997): 141.

[3]. Miroslav Spalajković, *La Bosnie et L'Herzégovine: Étude d'histoire diplomatique et de droit international* (Paris: Rousseau, 1899), xxii.

[4]. Carlo Sforza, *Fifty Years of War and Diplomacy in the Balkans: Pashich and the Union of the Yugoslavs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), 74-76.

[5]. Vojislav Bogićević, ed., *Sarajevski atentat: Izvorne stenografske bilješke sa Glavne rasprave protiv Gavrila Principa i drugova, održane u Sarajevu 1914 g.* (Sarajevo: Državni arhiv narodne republike Bosne i Hercegovine, 1954), 37, 41.

[6]. Ibid., 189-190.

[7]. Peter Koláček, "Pesnik Radovan," *Delo*, July 28, 2008.

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