

Tatiana JOVIĆ, *Diplomatic Missions in the Principality and the Kingdom of Montenegro*, National Museum of Montenegro, Cetinje, 2010, 359 p.

Montenegro. A tiny, extremely wild, almost impracticable land, a negligible quantity for the European world at the turn of the last century. A poor country whose capital was smaller than many backwater European towns. The poverty of the country did not permit it to pay its own way in the world, a fact which figured prominently in the conduct of its foreign affairs. So much so that, more than three decades after its independence was recognized, the distinguished emissary and attorney minister in Constantinople was the only Montenegrin diplomatic representative abroad. Nevertheless, Montenegro was an important chess piece in matches between Vienna and St. Petersburg for hegemony in the Balkans and between Vienna and Rome for dominance in the Adriatic. In the decade before World War I, Montenegro exercised political influence far out of proportion to her small size and meager resources. Cetinje, her unimposing mountain capital, was the site of constant diplomatic activity: after the Berlin Congress in 1878 eleven diplomatic missions were established here. Doubtlessly, credit must be given to the highflying Nicholas of Montenegro, who cunningly used the geographical position of his country in the volatile Balkans, a region of conflicting nationalist aspirations and Great Powers rivalries. One of the least prepossessing capitals in Europe, Cetinje is a less than popular destination among the European diplomats. Both due to its inclement weather and tiresome travels, and the lack of any aristocratic society, that forces the diplomatic corps officers into a modest, dull lifestyle. As found first hand by Western travelers, there are no imposing buildings, no theatres, no crowded streets, neither electric trams nor trains. Everything is of the simplest kind, almost primitive. For such causes, some diplomats will choose to set up their residencies in Dubrovnik.

This book is surprising by the richness and diversity of information on an apparently unprepossessing subject. Up to now, studies of Montenegrin diplomatic relations were primarily focused on the research of the development of these relations with the countries which had already had their formal representative in Cetinje. Tatiana Jović has more ambitious, and successful, plans. Her attention is focused on the structure of the diplomatic and consulate personnel, their residencies, and on the influence they had on the civilization and cultural development in Montenegro. Their activities, finds the author, had an especially pronounced effect in the Montenegrin capital, whose urban and cultural development was significantly prompted by the presence of the foreign representatives. For instance, an interesting segment of the modernization of Montenegrin society and its adoption of the European standards is illustrated by the established ceremonial of the foreign diplomat's reception.

Each of the eleven diplomatic missions is dealt with individually, using the same criteria: its history, the list of the diplomatic and (where applicable) consular personnel, the relations of the mission heads with the Montenegrin sovereign, and the history of the buildings where such missions operated. All such information is supported by photographs from King Nicholas's residence located in Cetinje. This offers the reader a partial, but true picture of these buildings and the scenes from the cultural life of the diplomats during their residence in Cetinje, as well as elsewhere in Montenegro. The picture is a result of an impressive research work: local archives, Montenegrin periodicals, almanacs, memoirs and travel writing. Especially precious information about the interiors of these residential buildings in Cetinje was found in the Austrian State Archives in Vienna, as well as in the British, Italian, and Greek embassies in Belgrade.

This is not simply a riveting book warmly recommendable to all those interested in the history of the modern diplomacy in the South-Eastern Europe. We would venture to say that Tatiana Jović imposes a model here that should be followed by other fellow researchers. Even though, for various reasons, a work dealing with such developments is sadly hard to imagine being released anytime soon in Romania or Bulgaria.

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