The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia under the Influence of Turkish Rule

Ivo Andrić Edited and translated by Želimir B. Juričić and John F. Loud

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Introduction

Ivo Andrić's formal education began in the summer of 1899 when, at the age of seven, he entered school in Višegrad, a colorful provincial town in southeastern Bosnia. Small and poorly equipped, the Višegrad elementary school (now the Vuk Karadžić school) was the only school in town. Situated beside the wooden bridge on the Rzav River, it was attended by some forty to fifty children from the town and its surrounding settlements. Its student body reflected the diverse demographic composition of the area: Poles, Jews, Muslims, Czechs, Germans, and Italians. On his way to and from school Andrić had to cross both the Drina and the Rzav bridges and walk through the main town. There is no doubt that the Višegrad bridge and the masterfully embroidered tales about it, which were narrated on the bridge itself—focal point of the town's life—by the town elders and passing travelers, had more than a passing effect on the mind of the future writer.

In the summer of 1903, after completing the Višegrad elementary school and with a yearly stipend of 200 Kronen from the Croatian society Napredak, Andrić moved to Sarajevo. There for the next eight years he attended the Velika Sarajevska Gimnazija (Great Sarajevo Gymnasium) and published his first poetic pieces. In October 1912, again with a scholarship from Napredak, he moved to Zagreb, Croatia's capital, where he entered the university. In his first year he studied biology, human anatomy, zoology, plant physiology, and mechanics as well as Croatian literature, which was taught by a well-known professor and politician, Dr. Đuro Šurmin. In the fall of 1913 Andrić moved to Austria to continue his studies at the University of Vienna. The shift in his interests from science to humanities is evident from his second-year transcript. Notable were his increasing interest in Serbian and Croatian literatures and the peoples of the Balkan

peninsula; teaching these subjects in Vienna were the foremost Slavists of the period, Milan Rešetar and Joseph Jireček.[1]

Andrić's stay in Vienna was short. Unable to bear the severe Austrian climate, which seriously affected his delicate health—inflammation of the throat and lungs—Andrić moved to Poland on the advice of his physician. In April 1914 he enrolled in the third year of Arts at the University of Cracow. The physical and cultural climate of the city seems to have agreed with the young student. "The place suited me, I was in good spirits. The magnificant history of the Poles, uttered through thousands of voices, the peace radiating from the city, the people . . . , the kind friends who ardently discussed the freedom of their homeland, the respected professors whose lectures I attended. . . . Cracow is the only place in Europe—and I have known quite a few!—whose memories and name can stir my heart and warm my blood."[2]

Following the assassination in 1914 of the Austrian archduke, Franz Ferdinand, in Sarajevo, Andrić interrupted his studies and hurriedly left Poland. However, upon his arrival in what is now Yugoslavia he was arrested, imprisoned, and then interned for his alleged participation in a revolutionary movement known as "Mlada Bosna," which opposed the Hapsburg regime and sought unity and independence for the South Slavic peoples. He was released in 1917 at the age of twenty-two, in poor health and financially desperate. He worked feverishly at his writing and to augment his income took a part-time editorial position with a local literary journal. In 1918 he registered into the final year of his studies at Zagreb University, but because of health, family, and financial problems he was forced to leave, having completed the required course work but not having taken the final exams. With a view to securing some kind of steady employment, he wrote to Tugomir Alaupović, his former teacher at secondary school and now a cabinet minister in the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, with the following plea:

> My mother lives with my aunt and uncle in Višegrad. They do not live badly and if I send them anything it is out of affection, but the uncle is 67 years old, with one foot in the grave, and the day he dies the sacred and hard duty to take care of my mother and aunt will fall to me. It is because of this that I am no longer inclined to

> continue living this poor, if free and nice, life. I do not have anyone to discuss this matter with, and thus I beg you to keep my situation in mind and help me with your influence and advice. My only desire is that my job not turn me completely away from literary activity. Please forgive me for talking so much about myself and my troubles, but it is a question of my relatives about whom it is already my duty to be concerned.[3]

Alaupović readily offered his former student a junior position in his ministry (the Ministry of Religious Affairs), which Andrić accepted. In October 1919 the twenty-seven-year-old future government employee took up residence in Belgrade, a city which, like Cracow, impressed him from the start and which would make him its lifelong devotee.

Andrić's tenure at the Ministry of Religious Affairs was brief. In February 1920 he was granted a transfer to the more prestigious Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Soon he was posted as a vice-consul in the Royal Yugoslav Consulate in the Vatican. He found work in the consulate less taxing than he expected. This allowed him to devote more time to his other pursuits and literary work. In his year and a half stay in the capital of Roman Catholicism, Andrić did a fair amount of writing and sightseeing. In September, "Put Alije Đerzeleza" (The Journey of Đerzelez Alija), his first short story, was published in Belgrade. "Ćorkan i Švabica" (Ćorkan and the German Woman), another story with a Bosnian theme, was also submitted for publication. Surrounded by some of the world's greatest art treasures and the spectacular scenic beauty of the country, the young diplomat found time to explore local museums and archives, also taking in the cultural and historic sites with which Italy, and the holy city of Rome, abounded. In the next two years he was transferred twice, first to Bucharest, Romania, in 1921 and a year later, now as vice-consul second class, to the Royal Yugoslav Consulate in the small town of Trieste on the Yugoslav-Italian border. As his health deteriorated almost immediately after his arrival in Italy—catarrh, causing anemia and weakness, was discovered in both his lungs—he begged the ministry for yet another transfer. In January 1923, after a brief vacation in Venice, Andrić left Italy for the second time. In his long diplomatic career, which officially spanned more than two decades, he never returned to that country. His work in

the consulate in Graz was light. This allowed him to devote more time to his writing and to honor a number of long-standing commitments to the Yugoslav journals (*Jugoslavenska Njiva, Srpski Književni Glasnik, Savremenik*) and publishers (Cvijanović) besieging him for contributions. Then, at the end of 1923, just as he was beginning to settle into his new post and his writing was gaining recognition, he suddenly found himself unemployed. Still an unfinished student of Slavistics, Andrić was directly affected by a new government regulation concerning qualifications of civil service personnel. The regulation stated, in part, that only persons with recognized university degrees would be permitted to continue occupying important positions in the kingdom's civil service, particularly in the diplomatic services abroad (Article 243, Royal Proclamation No. 5633, 1923).[4] Andrić was requested to surrender his position as vice-consul in Graz and to leave the service. He was offered two months' severance pay.[5]

A number of appeals aimed at circumventing the new regulations and retaining Andrić in the service were immediately made to the ministry in Belgrade: two by Vladislav Budisavljević, the consul-general in Graz and Andrić's immediate superior, and one by Andrić himself. In his first letter to Momčilo Ninčić, the Yugoslav foreign minister, Budisavljević praised Andrić's dedication to work and his exemplary behavior both at and outside the workplace and cited his very good rapport with his colleagues, characteristics deserving of consideration before the final decision was made regarding his dismissal. "I, personally, would wish Andrić to stay in this Consulate, if at all possible," he concluded.[6] In his second letter Budisavljević mentioned Andrić's exceptional dedication to, and his thorough knowledge of, all aspects of diplomatic work, his noted qualifications and reputation as a writer, as well as his knowledge of the German language, which Budisavljević considered absolutely essential. He requested Ninčić to allow Andrić to remain with the consulate at least until the completion of his doctoral studies, which he had begun one year before, in 1923, at the University of Graz. "It is my firm belief that with time Andrić will prove himself worthy of your trust and will become an excellent civil servant, who can only be a credit to our profession, the country, and its people."[7]

Andrić wrote his own appeal to the minister: "I request the Ministry to keep me as a day worker in the Royal Consulate in Graz, with my

present income, until I have finished my doctorate. Should this be possible, I am prepared to forfeit the severance pay promised me."[8]

At the end of February 1924 the minister made his decision. Andrić was to remain in the consulate as a day worker until completion of his doctoral studies. Until further notice he was to be paid his present salary as vice-consul (second class), abroad.[9] Having thus temporarily settled his working status, and with it his financial situation, Andrić now turned his full attention to completing his university studies. These included writing a doctoral dissertation, passing two very rigorous examinations, and finishing the required course work.

Would Andrić have undertaken this most challenging and demanding task under different circumstances? Probably not, according to his own subsequent assessment of the situation: "I was under the compulsion of the new civil service law. The law had to be obeyed then as well. By the new civil service law a complete university education was required for my position in the Ministry. Thus I temporarily left the service."[10]

According to Andrić's "Record of Degree Program," the *Index*, listing the courses taken by a student, the hours of attendance, and the names of professors conducting them, in his two semesters at the University of Graz he attended a total of thirty-nine hours of lectures ranging from history, language, and grammar to sociology and philosophy. Specifically, in the winter semester of 1923 he took the following courses:

History of Austria after 1848
(2 hours, Dr. R. Kaindl)
Seminar in Austrian History
(2 hours, Kaindl)
Introduction to the Study of Slavic Philology
(2 hours, Dr. H. F. Schmid)
Old Church Slavonic Grammar
(4 hours, Schmid)
Exercises in Old Church Slavonic
(2 hours, Schmid)
The Concept of Individuality in the Philosophy of Nature and Philosophical Sociology
(1 hour, Dr. Spitzer)[11]

For the summer semester, April–July 1924, Andrić's transcript reads as follows:

Historical Grammar of the Russian Language
(4 hours, Schmid)
Slavic Antiquities
(2 hours, Schmid)
Seminar in Slavic Philology
(3 hours, Schmid)
History of Austria since 1848, Part 2
(5 hours, Kaindl)
Little Germans and Great Germans
(1 hour, Kaindl)
History Seminar
(2 hours, Kaindl)
Theory of Perception, Part 2
(4 hours, Dr. E. Mally)
Seminar in Philosophy
(2 hours, Mally)[12]

In addition to lectures, doctoral candidates were required to pass two extensive oral examinations based on the required courses and on their own area of research. They were permitted to take these examinations only after submitting their doctoral dissertations, which were then evaluated by a panel of readers and duly marked. In other words, the dissertation held the key to one's studies toward the doctoral degree.

Andrić submitted his dissertation to the office of the Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy on 14 May 1924. It was officially received the next day and almost at once forwarded for assessment to Professors Schmid and Kaindl. Heinrich Felix Schmid and Raimund Friedrich Kaindl had been selected by the office of the dean as the most competent scholars in Andrić's special field of interest, which was Bosnia. Their appraisal is given below after a description and summary of the work itself.

Its title (page 1) reads *Die Entwicklung des geistigen Lebens in Bosnien unter der Einwirkung der türkischen Herrschaft* (The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia under the Influence of Turkish Rule). Above it are the signatures of the two readers (Schmid and Kaindl) together

with the number of the dissertation, the date of its submission, and the stamp of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Karl Franz University in Graz. Page 2 reads, "Dissertation for the granting of the doctorate of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Karl Franz University in Graz, presented by Ivo Andrić from Sarajevo, SHS [Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes]." The body of the work consists of 143 double-spaced typewritten pages and is divided into two parts: volume 1 (marked by hand as "Bd. 1"), 107 pages, constituting the text itself, and volume 2 ("Bd. 2"), thirty-six pages, consisting of notes to the separate chapters (*Anmerkungen*). The work is framed by a Preface (*Vorwort*) and a Supplement (*Anhang*).

In his brief, one-page preface the author states what he proposes doing: "to trace the evolution of Bosnia's intellectual and spiritual life from the time of national independence to the final disappearance of Turkish power." He also offers the following disclaimer: "Individual segments along the line of development cannot all be traced with equal clarity and force. Even in Bosnia itself, sources for many events and many a stretch of time are lacking or else unreliable. Working outside the country, I have had to content myself with those at hand, or with such as I was able to procure while assembling this work." The Preface concludes, succinctly and significantly: "In content and basic idea the present treatment is related to other works that I have composed in a different form and on a different occasion." Andrić referred here no doubt to the short fiction on Bosnian themes that he had already published, including such well-known stories as "Put Alije Đerzeleza," "Čorkan i Švabica," "U musafirhani," and "Mustafa Madžar." (Seven of these were to appear as a collection during the very year of his degree, 1924.) It is entirely possible that Andrić incorporated into his dissertation much material that he had accumulated over the years from the archives and libraries of the three Franciscan monasteries in Bosnia—Kreševo, Fojnica, and Sutjeska—and that he had intended to use in the writing of his "great Franciscan drama."[13] Unfortunately, that drama never saw the light of day. The fact that Andrić was able to write his dissertation in a relatively short period of time—less than a year—only adds to speculation that his thesis material was drawn from a supply earmarked for literary purposes and that, skillful craftsman as he already was with the pen, he had no difficulty in molding it into presentable form for a scholarly disserta-

tion. Some passages still exude that unmistakable Andrićevan short-story flavor, however carefully disguised in scholarly garb. But let us now turn to the work itself.

Chapter 1 examines spiritual life in Bosnia before the Turkish conquest in 1463. Of its three sections, the first analyzes Bosnia's general level of culture during its independence, the second considers the roles of the three churches—Catholic, Orthodox, and Patarin—in the country's cultural and political development up to the conquest, while the third deals with spiritual and political conditions in the country just prior to its being invaded.

The relatively short second chapter is concerned with the most characteristic reforms implemented by the Turkish occupiers. Islam, the religion of a warring Asiatic nation, in Andrić's analysis spread with unusual rapidity in Bosnia. Although it was diametrically opposed to the three dominant faiths battling for supremacy on Bosnian soil, Islam—which had been born and grew to maturity in a foreign climate and under a different social order and resisted change of any description—quickly suppressed the spiritual life of Bosnia. It was land and property that chiefly motivated the Bosnian nobility to convert to Islam. Besides religion, another alien custom brought by the conqueror and imposed on Bosnia was the child-tribute. Bright, good-looking, and healthy Christian boys aged from ten to fifteen and gathered from all parts of the empire were taken by force from their homes and carried to "Stambol." There they were circumcised, converted, made to forget their country of origin, and trained to serve either in the ranks of the janissaries or introduced into the governing elite. Some of these recruits eventually emerged as the highest military administrators and commanders in the Ottoman armies, and a select few even rose to the supreme post of grand vizier. Bosnia was not spared from the child-tribute. Andrić, some twenty years after finishing his dissertation, was to elaborate on this strange, merciless Turkish institution of the Adžami-Oglan in his novel *The Bridge on the Drina (Na Drini ćuprija).*

The central, third chapter is the longest and most important part of the dissertation and divides the work into equal parts. Here are examined the social and administrative organizations established by the Turks and the influence that they exerted on the lives of the *rayah,* the non-Muslims, in Bosnia. The law governing non-Islamic peoples

generally throughout the empire was known as the *Kanun-i-Rayah* (*rayah* law code). It consisted of a series of ordinances, authoritative decrees that nonbelievers, particularly Christians and Jews, were expected to follow and obey without question. Andrić lists twenty-four such regulations and proceeds to show both how unequally they were enforced in Bosnia and how deeply they cut into the moral and economic fabric of life for nonbelievers. He maintains that the Turkish, and particularly the local Islamized, ethnically Slavic, elements hindered any social or cultural uplifting of the *rayah*. They resisted and fought against all reforms and saw in each cultural achievement of the "infidel" *rayah* a tendency undermining the existing order and a danger to their own rights and privileges. Such attitudes were bound to have a negative effect on the literary and cultural life of the non-Muslim populations. This is the subject of the following chapter.

Divided into two parts, chapter 4 describes the intellectual life of the Catholic population under the Turks, as manifested in the literary and cultural work of the Franciscans. The first part deals with the purely religious literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the second with the literature of the nineteenth century. The Turkish occupation of Bosnia caused not only the collapse of the Bosnian kingdom but also of the Catholic church as a bastion of Western interests in the country. Most of the Franciscan monasteries and rectories were destroyed and the order was persecuted: of the original thirty-two monasteries only a few remained (Kreševo, Sutjeska, Fojnica, and Olovo) to keep "*das geistige Leben*" alive during the four long centuries of Turkish oppression. The literature of the Bosnian Franciscans was not the literature of idle, isolated, rich, and learned monks with refined and learned purposes. Rather primitive and at its early stages unoriginal and unstructured, the literature of the Bosnian Franciscans served as best it could the spiritual needs of a wide segment of the Christian population under the most difficult of circumstances and at the time it was needed most. This is "one of its most beautiful qualities and at the same time one of its greatest merits," the author concludes.

In the fifth and final chapter of the dissertation Andrić discusses the status of the Serbian Orthodox church under Turkish hegemony and especially during the first century of their rule. After a brief examination of such topics as church organization, living conditions