

NA STAZAMA IZBEGLIČKIM: SRPSKO PESNIŠTVO U IZBEGLIŠTVU, 1945–1968. Compiled by *Mateja Matejić* and *Bor. M. Karapandžić*. Melbourne: Srpska misao, 1969. 450 pp.

PESME. By *Mateja Matejić*. Munich: Iskra, 1964. 138 pp.

TUŽNO-VESELO, PRIPOVETKE. By *Dragoljub R. Aćimović*. Melbourne: Srpska misao, 1969. 136 pp.

Ten years ago, having written an article on the Croatian émigré poets, I began to collect material on the Serbian émigré writers. I got the books of Rastko Stanišić, Vukadin Kecan, and Milutin Manojlović (all three published in Toulon, France, 1948) and a small manuscript anthology (the gift of Stanišić) containing thirteen poets. Dragoljub Aćimović was kind enough to send me all of his books (published in Paris and Johannesburg). The best Serbian publishing house, Srpska misao (Serbian thought), located in Melbourne, Australia, has included in its regular and special editions several of the better-known Serbian writers; I have obtained all of these books. The poems of Ljubica Grković-Boljanić were published posthumously in Monterey, California. I followed, when possible, the Serbian newspapers or monthly journals, such as *Naša reč* (London) and *Iskra* (Munich), and copied from them those poems which I considered among the better ones. In these publications I also found scarce biographical information. Being aware that my knowledge was random, I did not touch upon the Serbian writers in exile in my book *Contemporary Serbian Literature* (1964).

I was happy, therefore, to receive the voluminous anthology of Serbian émigré poetry, *Na stazama izbegličkim*, prepared by the Orthodox priest, now a professor at the Ohio State University, Mateja Matejić, in collaboration with Boris Karapandžić. It contains poems by several poets whose names I learned for the first time. The editors were privileged to have personal contacts with many of those whose works had not yet been published in book form. Moreover, Karapandžić as an editor and Matejić as an active priest and a poet followed the same road as the great majority of the Serbian émigré writers: having fought in the ranks of Mihajlović and Nedić, they were forced to leave their native country in 1945, were imprisoned in Italian and German camps, began to publish short-lived literary journals, tried (often in vain) to adapt themselves to the new circumstances, and settled finally in various countries, mostly in the United States. They preferred to live in cities where the Serbian working class and their churches were concentrated (e.g., Milwaukee, Chicago, Gary, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh).

This anthology has almost the same features, positive and negative, that are characteristic of other émigré literatures. First, there are many hymns to the cherished native land or laments about abandoned mothers (sometimes girl friends), cruelties perpetrated by others, the betrayal by the Allies, clouded skies and a horizon without a ray of sun. The Serb, as a "soldier of Christ," was engaged in an uneven battle in this world where the forces of evil prevail. However, Serbia will be resurrected and become again a harbor of freedom and justice. Some poets mention forgiveness and the future brotherhood of men (e.g., Aćimović at the end of his excellent "Song of the Balkans"), while others portray their neighbors as ferocious beasts devouring with delight the innocent Serbian lambs. Matejić thinks that the greatest guilt lies upon the "infallible" pope because he did not prevent his flock from taking part in the "bloody feast"! Second, though living for more

than two decades in Western countries, these poets seldom mention the lands that gave them protection and employment. Moreover, in their productions there is usually no evidence of present-day literary trends; their colleagues living and writing in Communist Yugoslavia seem more aware of what is going on in the world today than these émigrés, whose hearts and minds remained forever attached to childhood memories and closed to any other impressions and influences. Matejić correctly points out that they are, not always successfully, imitators of the Serbian poets who were popular at the end of the century. There are, nevertheless, several among them (e.g., Kecan, Aćimović, Vavić, and Strizović) who show that they have espoused the issues and techniques of their own times. Third, forced to live in countries where Serbian is not spoken and where, even in their homes, they communicate in foreign languages, the poets gradually forget the language or at least do not enrich their expressive capacities. Being inclined to description and narration they are “far behind” (Matejić) when compared with the poets in Yugoslavia.

In spite of these symptomatic weaknesses, this anthology could have been much better if the editors had not tried to include every Serbian émigré who wrote poetry. It is a pity that Matejić, who is one of the leading Serbian émigré poets (as evidenced by his selected poems, *Pesme*, 1964), did not apply exclusively aesthetic criteria. Though one understands Matejić's admiration for the bishop Velimirović, his pious and patriotic sermons are not poetry. At least half of the thirty-nine poets do not belong in a representative anthology. Instead, I believe that Miloš Crnjanski's powerful “Lament Over Belgrade” (1962) should have been included to enrich this selection; if Crnjanski's return to Yugoslavia (1965) is the reason he was not mentioned, then why is Živorad Ilić included? It is surprising that there is no information whatsoever about many writers, though certain of them are friends of or live near the editors (e.g., Purić, Stanišić, and Kecan). Is Niko Mirošević-Sorgo a Serbian poet? It is said (p. 117) that the first part of the book contains the poems of those already deceased, but Grković-Boljanić, who appears later, died in 1960. In general, chronology should be followed or thematic division should be made clear. Printing mistakes should be eliminated (e.g., Dučić's collected works were published in 1932).

I am glad to end this short review of Serbian émigré writers with a positive remark. It was Kecan who, though formally imitating Mayakovsky, first struck an original note with his long poem *When Will Tomorrow Arrive?* (1948); he was followed in the fifties by Aćimović, who in his numerous songs depicted the world as he saw it, always finding an adequate expression. Recently he published his short stories, many of which previously had appeared in *Naša reč*. These stories are divided into two parts. The first, entitled “Sorrowfully,” deals with war episodes; we hear the same old tales of how the Chetniks fought bravely and were shamefully handed over to the partisans. The second part, entitled “Joyfully,” is something completely new in émigré literature, and hopefully could open new possibilities for the stagnant émigré waters. Aćimović narrates, with hilarity and humor, how the former colonel, “the national hero,” became in Paris an embezzler, adventurer, and drunkard. Aćimović replied to his “patriotic” critics that émigré literature should be freed from cheap propaganda and should describe the former Chetniks as they are: “To search for truth is a higher duty than to obey political directives.” Freedom from all taboos and prejudices could mean real progress.

ANTE KADIĆ
Indiana University