

Russian influence on the development of Belgrade after the First World War

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Abstract—Belgrade resembles a salon where you can see the most diverse styles and directions of architecture, and the old part of the city was greatly influenced by Russian architects. In the dramatic period after the First World War, more than 50,000 refugees from Imperial Russia arrived in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. They lived mainly in their associations with a special church and school system. Among the people who came to the country many highly educated people who influenced the development of all areas of cultural and social life in Serbia. They significantly improved all areas in which they worked and contributed to the country's recovery from the consequences of the war as soon as possible. About 400 architects, engineers, painters, and sculptors worked in Serbia, while about 50 worked in Belgrade. Russian architects built monumental buildings in Serbia for the needs of the Court and the government. They also restored churches and monasteries and built mausoleums and public monuments. The interwar architecture of Belgrade would be unimaginable without these masters. The most important architects of Belgrade include Nikola Krasnov, Sergej Smirnov, Vasilij Baumgarten, Viktor Lukomski, and Roman Verhovski. The most significant buildings built include Hotel Moskva, the Ministry of Finances, Manjež Theater, the old Palace at Dedinje, the Patriarchy, Russian The Home of Russian Culture, the General Staff, the Palace of Pension Fund, the church of Alexander Nevski. The builders of Belgrade in the first half of the twentieth century have been unfairly forgotten.

Keywords— *Russian architects, Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, Belgrade (key words)*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Russian community was one of Belgrade's best organized national communities between the two world wars. This is supported by the fact that they had their own church and school system.

The White Russians played a pivotal role in developing cultural and scientific life in Serbia between the two world wars. Their contributions were instrumental in the country's swift recovery from the catastrophic aftermath of the war. This group of prominent Russians included numerous professors, cultural and scientific workers, and several Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts academics. According to Nikolay Stepanov, more than half of the emigrant families were military personnel and civil servants, about 30 percent worked in the economy, and 14 percent were professors, lecturers, and writers. Only 3 percent had no education [1].

In particular, the influence of architects on the construction of the old part of Belgrade between the two world wars should be highlighted. A group of 50 Russian architects and artists changed the map of Belgrade and Serbia forever. They designed

buildings of national importance and dozens of private villas that today adorn the central parts of the capital.

To preserve their culture authentically, Russian emigrants built the Russian House of Emperor Nicholas II Romanov in Belgrade. At that time, the home was the scientific, educational, and cultural seat of emigration.



Fig. 1. The Russian House of Emperor Nicholas II Romanov in Belgrade, Serbia.

II. HISTORY

After the defeat in the civil war, about 2 million Russians left their country. About 40,000 (mostly intellectuals) came to the Kingdom of SHS and settled mainly in larger cities. 10,000 Russian emigrants lived in Belgrade, with about 200,000 inhabitants then [2]. Russian emigrants were created everywhere, but mostly in the territory of today's Serbia, where almost 90 percent of those people were concentrated.

Belgrade has become the largest gathering center for these people in Europe. The authorities did not ask them to take Yugoslav passports but gave them documents for foreigners. Also, they were given all other civil and human rights. Apart from Belgrade, the centers of Russian emigration were Bela Crkva and Sremski Karlovci. Smaller groups of settlers lived in smaller towns.

Russian emigrants had their schools and kindergartens for their children. They received their military education according to the rules of the Russian army, which is a unique case in the world. The Russian clergy was also forced to leave their homeland. The Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church regularly met in Sremski Karlovci in 1921. Russian parishes were founded in smaller towns.

III. "RUSSIAN BELGRADE" BETWEEN TWO WORLD WARS

The influence of Russians on the development of society, science, education, and culture in Belgrade and the Kingdom during the two world wars was great. In this paper, we briefly overview the impact these emigrants made. Their influence on society at that time is best described in the words of academician Matija Bećković: "Their arrival was a great misfortune for them, but a great happiness for us and our newly created, war-torn and devastated country. Almost no part of the city was where a Russian doctor or professor did not come".

The great human potential that arrived in Serbia will have a great impact and significantly contribute to the development of Serbia in all areas. The industry's flourishing is largely the result of the education of our experts at technical faculties, where Russian lecturers, scientists, and university professors worked. Considering the consequences of the First World War, very few professors remained in the country's universities. Very quickly, as many as 28 Russian professors came to head university departments in the Kingdom. Russian professors made up a quarter of the teaching staff at the University of Belgrade and the Faculty of Agriculture and Medicine, even half [1]. A detailed description of the influence of Russian professors (emigrants) on the development of Belgrade University is given in the literature [3].

For example, they gave twelve academicians to the Serbian Academy of Sciences. The names of Russian academics such as Laskarev, Ostrogorski, Bilimovich, Farmakovski, and others are still mentioned with respect in the Serbian Academy of Sciences. Vladimir Laskarev was a university professor and academician. His areas of interest were geology and paleontology. He was a famous Serbian, Russian, and European scientist. Vladimir Farmakovski was a mechanical engineer, locomotive constructor, university professor, founder and director of the Mechanical Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences, and the first dean of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering. Georgije Aleksandrovič Ostrogorski was a historian, a professor of Byzantine history at the University of Belgrade, and the founder of the Byzantological Institute, SANU. He is one of the greatest Byzantologists of the twentieth century and the recipient of many domestic and foreign scientific awards.

With their number and professional qualities, Russian emigrant doctors made a huge contribution to improving the health service and the development of medicine between the two wars, especially in Serbia, where the largest number lived and worked. Among the Russian doctors in Serbia were professors of medical faculties, most of whom would later continue their careers in Paris, Prague, Berlin, Sofia, and other European capitals. In medicine, they make great contributions. Epidemiologist and doctor of medical sciences who contributed to eradicating smallpox in our country in 1972, prof. Dr. Stevan Litvinjenko dedicated his book to Russian doctors and their works in Serbia and Montenegro between the two world wars [4].

Serbia was helped by Russian doctors even before the fall of Imperial Russia. In the Balkan wars and the First World War, military medical missions were sent to help Serbian soldiers. Professor Sergey Ramzin, with his discovery of iodine deficiency in drinking water, helped almost completely eradicate goiter in our people. The Russians founded the Children's Clinic and the Russian Antituberculosis Dispensary in Belgrade. Also,

they established an internal clinic of the Faculty of Medicine. The famous Russian doctor Aleksandar Ignatovski was one of the founders of the Faculty of Medicine in Belgrade.

We cannot fail to mention the contribution they made in the field of culture. They accelerated the development and modernization of theater in our country, founded opera and ballet, and engaged in pedagogical work. The theater artists from Russia were of different profiles and ages and were engaged in the entire former Yugoslavia. Theater life in Serbia cannot be imagined without Russian artists. They brought to Serbia experience from large Russian theaters and other institutions where they successfully created. Russian artists turned the Belgrade Opera and Theater into an institution of European rank.

The first acting school was opened and a great contribution to the development of comics. One of the first pre-war comics authors was Đorđe Lobacev. The influence of Stjepan Fyodorovic Kolesnikov on our painting is invaluable.

Another significant development in Serbia was the introduction of driver's licenses, a crucial step in our transportation history. In addition, a taxi service was established, which operated all taxi stations in Belgrade, further enhancing the city's infrastructure.

It is important to note that the descendants of some famous Russian families, such as relatives of Suvorov, Lermontov, Tolstoy, and Bulgakov, moved to Serbia.

According to the author, Russian architects and builders had the greatest influence on the development of the Belgrade area.

IV. THE INFLUENCE OF ARCHITECTS AND BUILDERS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF BELGRADE

Historians estimate that about one thousand two hundred engineers came to our country, and we had five hundred then. In the middle of 1922, the Society of Russian Engineers and the Society of Russian Architects were founded. With the support of King Alexander, these experts were employed in state institutions.

Serbia owes a lot to Russian architects who lived and created in this region between the two world wars. They designed and built many public buildings in Belgrade at the time. These buildings are still captivating with their appearance and style. Also, they built many private villas for rich people of that time. In addition to building, they influenced the development of young Serbian authors and, worthily, replaced the great Serbian architects from the time before the Great War. Under the influence of these people, the city changed its appearance from an oriental to a modern European city. The following text will mention some of the most important authors from that time.

A. *Nikolay Krasnov*

With his hard work during his two decades in Belgrade, he changed the image of an oriental city into a modern European capital. Almost all buildings in central Belgrade have an old architectural style and are the work of Krasnov. Many buildings have become symbols of the capital, such as the Serbian Government building, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Serbian Archives, and the Ministry of Finance and Economy. At this point, I would like to emphasize the adaptation of the Manjež theater. The interior design of the National Assembly

building and the Royal (old) Palace in Dedinje is of inestimable value. The following images show the architectural works of Nikolai Krasnov.



Fig. 2. Serbian Government building

His work is so great that it surprised his colleagues, not just ordinary people.



Fig. 7. The interior of the Royal (Old) Palace in Dedinje



Fig. 3. Serbian archives

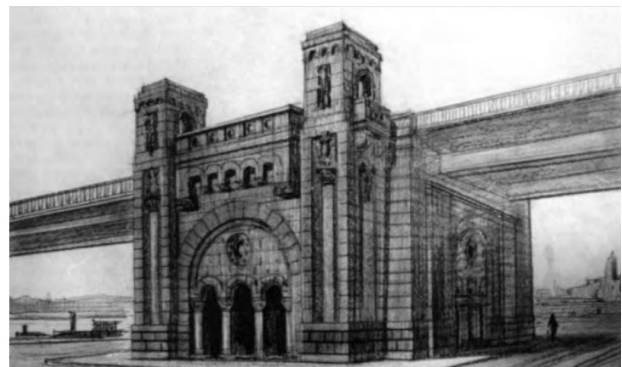


Fig. 8. Conceptual project for the tower of the bridge of King Alexander I Karadjordjević



Fig. 4. Adaptation of Manjež theatar

Krasnov (1864-1939) was born in Podmoskovlje. He completed his studies in architecture, painting, and sculpture in Moscow. Immediately after his studies, he became the chief architect in Yalta (the island of Crimea), where he designed many buildings for the needs of the Russian emperor. In Yalta, he designed the "Livadia" castle, the summer residence of Tsar Nicholas, which became world-famous for the historic meeting between Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill. Because of his great work, he became a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Petrograd. His work in Crimea was ended by the October Revolution, after which he moved to Belgrade and got a job in the Ministry of Construction.



Fig. 5. The interiors of the National Assembly building

He left an invaluable legacy to Serbia. He was buried in the Russian plot of the New Cemetery. The one street in the central city municipality of Vračar bears his name. Also, a white marble monument was made to him in Small Tašmajdan Park.



Fig. 9. The marble monument to Nikolay Krasnov in Small Tašmajdan Park.

B. Vasilij Fedorovič fon Baumgarten

Baumgarten (1879 - 1962) was an architect, military engineer, and general of the White Army and the Yugoslav Royal Army. Before the October Revolution, he had a notable career in Petrograd. After the revolution, he escaped to Turkey with the army, and then in 1920, he came to the Kingdom of SHS. Soon, he was employed as an architect in the Ministry of the Army and Navy project sector, and he also worked for the needs of the Ministry of Construction. He died in Argentina in 1962 and was buried at the British Cemetery in Buenos Aires.

He designed the headquarters of the General Staff of the Army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and after World War II, the General Staff of the Yugoslav People's Army. The building was built with money received as war reparations from Austria-Hungary after the First World War and cost 35 million dinars. It was declared the most beautiful building in Belgrade in 1937, and it was protected as a cultural asset in 1984 due to its historical and architectural values.



Fig. 10. The building of the General Staff of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia

At the beginning of the thirties of the twentieth century, he designed the monumental building of the Russian House of Emperor Nikolay II Romanov (Figure 1) in Kraljice Natalija Street in Belgrade. The construction of a Russian center that would gather emigrants was a priority of the Russian community in Serbia. The idea was supported by King Aleksandar Karađorđević, Serbian Patriarch Varnava, and Academician Aleksandar Belić, who was the chairman of the Committee for Russian Culture at the time. The Russian

Scientific Institute worked within that institution, where many famous scientists and writers worked.

C. Viktor Lukomski

Viktor Lukomski (1884 - 1947) was one of the more famous Russian emigrant engineers. He came to Serbia as a graduate of the Institute of Civil Engineers "Tsar Nicholas I" in St. Petersburg. In Belgrade, he worked as an architect at the Ministry of Construction. He opened his own private architectural office when he obtained his independent license. He was a member of the Russian art group Krug, a member of ULUS, and a member of the association Kolo Yugoslav Fine Artists. He died in 1947 in Belgrade.

One of the most notable contributions of Lukomski is the design of the Patriarchate of the Serbian Orthodox Church, a building that stands as a testament to his architectural prowess. Constructed in 1934, the Patriarchate replaced the old Metropolis. Its complex architecture, a hallmark of Lukomski's style, inspires awe and admiration.



Fig. 11. The building of the Belgrade Patriarchate

Viktor Lukomski is the author of the small church of St. Sava on Vračar Hill in Belgrade. It is located directly next to the Church of St. Sava. It is the successor of the chapel that was built on that site in 1895.

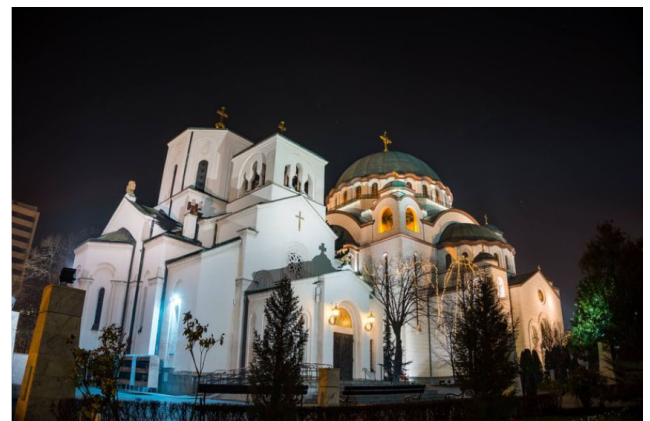


Fig. 12. Small church near the temple of Saint Sava

At the request of King Aleksandar Karađorđević, he built a hotel in 1928 on the Avala mountain near Belgrade. Hotel Avala is connected with many important events. The first official ski competition in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia occurred in the hotel's parking lot in 1929. In May 1957, the first TV signal in Yugoslavia was broadcast from the hotel's roof. The transmitter

was located in that place until 1965 when the famous Avala TV tower was built.

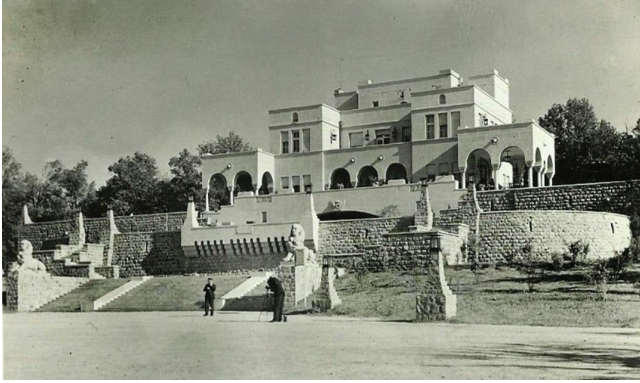


Fig. 13. Hotel Avala in 1930.

D. Other architects

Russian architects left an indelible mark on the history of Belgrade. In this place, it is impossible to describe in detail all their contributions, as was the case with the previous three authors. That's why we will show some of the buildings built and their authors in the next couple of pictures.



Fig. 14. Military museum on Kalemegdan (designer: Aleksandar Vasiljev)

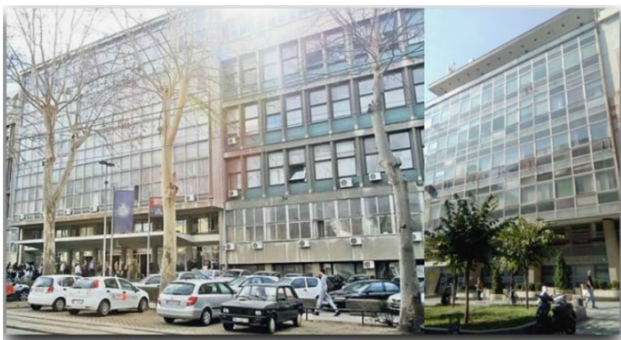


Fig. 15. The Faculty of Mechanical Engineering building and the Jugobanka building in Kralja Petra Street (designer: Grigorij Samoilov)

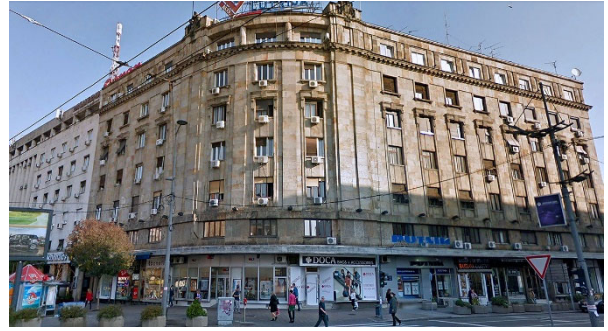


Fig. 16. The palace of the pension fund (designer: Grigorij Samoilov)



Fig. 17. The main post office building in Takovska street (designer: Grigorij Samoilov)

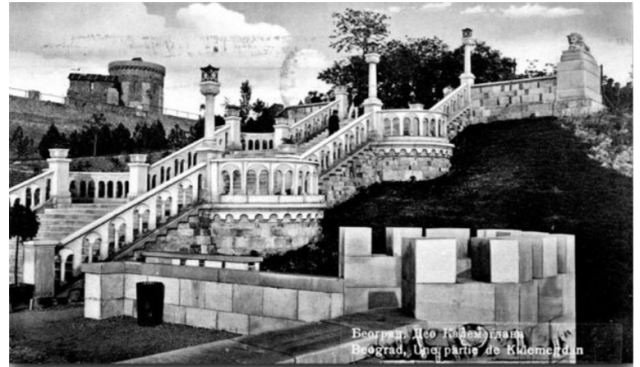


Fig. 18. The stairs on Kalemegdan (designer: Kovaljevski)



Fig. 19. Student dormitory King Alexander I (designer: Kovaljevski)

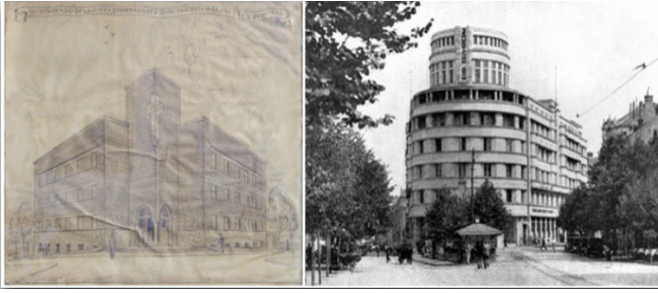


Fig. 20. Sketch of the boarding school of the Faculty of Theology and the building of the Crafts House (designer: Petar Anagnosti)

V. CONCLUSION

The Russian contribution to the development of Belgrade and Serbia between the two world wars is immeasurably great. Intellectuals from Russia have contributed to the development of the country and the improvement of many spheres of public life. That is why we should remember them with pride and remember them.

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