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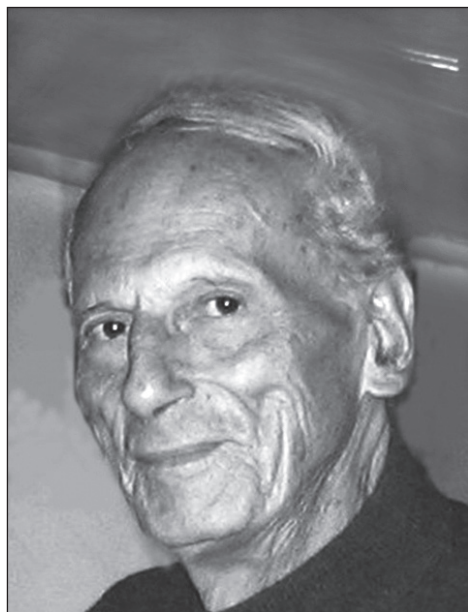
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IN MEMORIAM



Djurica Krstić
(1924–2018)

My memory of Djurica Krstić is that of a fine gentleman, a tall, slender man in his nineties who, if seated, would get up, quite effortlessly and casually, to greet his much younger colleagues, one of them being me. Djurica Krstić was the son of Orestije Krstić, a fighter pilot of the First Serbian Squadron on the Salonika Front, a reserve Air Force major, member of the Skopje Aero-Club, editor of the aviation magazine *Naša krila* (Our Wings), founding member of the Serbian Cultural Club, advisor with the Ministry of Forestry and Mining of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and, for a while, mayor of Tetovo. In his memoirs, his son speaks of his love of nature. Djurica Krstić was born in Skopje, Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, in 1924, and his early childhood memories include Vodno, the mountain overlooking the town, and later, two other mountains, Šara and Jablanica. His mother, Zora, was an engineer of agronomy. It was much later that Djurica Krstić, now a fellow of the Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, was able to combine his interest “in the lifestyle and customs of highlanders with a penchant for spending time in nature”: “I couldn’t imagine that my new job would take me to the mountains, where the Shakespearean thought about business and pleasure

would become a reality to me.” Most of his work at the Institute was “fieldwork aimed at tracing the relics of customary law in the last third of the twentieth century” in South-East Europe. His research began from the Serbian Kuć and Vasojević clans in Montenegro. His family history and his father’s biography speak volumes about his own interests and worldview. As if his father’s careers in aviation and forestry – the father authored a poetic plea “The Forest’s Prayer” – were intertwined somehow within his personal and professional choices along with a particular love of freedom. Djurica Krstić travelled by plane for the first time as a four-year-old, in 1928, on the inaugural flight of the Yugoslav airline Aeroput (Airway) from Skopje to Belgrade. A lovely photograph of his getting on the plane has survived as a testimony to his first flight. A few times he was aboard the plane flown by his father as a reserve Air Force pilot. It was not an accident that Djurica Krstić took his PhD in international aviation law. At the Institute for Comparative Law, where he worked before joining the Institute for Balkan Studies, he headed the aviation law and astronautic law group. He participated in international astronautical congresses and served on the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts’ Committee on Astronautics, Space Law Section. He spent a summer in London on the British Council’s research grant, and then, as a grantee of the Fulbright and the Ford Foundations, went to the United States, where he began his postgraduate studies at Princeton and completed them at the University of Chicago.

During the Second World War Djurica Krstić and his brother were members of the Yugoslav Ravna Gora Youth, Avala Corps, HQ no. 501, tasked with running off copies of the paper *Glas Avale* (Voice of Avala) on a gestetner machine: “It can be said that the intellectual youth of Belgrade – with the exception of a negligible number of phoney communists, an even more negligible number of Ljotić’s followers and somewhat more numerous bon vivants, mostly from above-average affluent families – had national-democratic leanings. They embraced the ideas of the pre-war Cultural Club of Slobodan Jovanović, Dragiša Vasić and other distinguished figures of pre-war Belgrade. Some of them were inspired by the Democratic Community of Ljuba Davidović, Milan Grol and others: “To us, this choice,” as recorded by Djurica Krstić’s brother Uglješa, “was not at all a for-or-against choice. This was simply a natural participation in the historical continuity of national-democratic and homeland-defending traditions.” Speaking of his generation, Djurica Krstić recorded with regret that most best students of the Third Belgrade High School had ended up abroad: “A huge majority of the ablest students from my class went abroad to find shelter from the large cloud of totalitarianism that had begun to spread over Europe.” The one-sided way of thinking that came with the new authorities was utterly alien to them. As a good analysis noted: “The Soviets were accustomed to the one-party regime and unanimity on all political issues, and it was therefore quite beyond them that anyone should care about nuances and gradations common in

parliamentary democracies. Whereas the political spectrum in a parliamentary system ranges from the red [radical left] to the dark blue [conservative] colour, the Soviet spectrum has only two colours – black and white. You're either *for* or you're an enemy spy." Unaware of this new logic, many relatives and friends of Djurica Krstić paid a price after the war.

Djurica Krstić was a fellow of the Institute for Balkan Studies from 1972 until his retirement in 1988, leading the project on customary law and self-governments in the Balkans and the countries of South-East Europe, and actively participating in the work of the Serbian Academy's Committee on the Sources of Serbian Law. He was also a member of the Association of Literary Translators of Serbia and a certified court interpreter for English.

Boris Milosavljević

