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EARLY LONDON PERIOD OF DIMITRIJE MITRINOVIC (1914–1919). EMERGENCE OF THE REFORMER OF MANKIND¹

Summary: The paper covers the life and activities of Dimitrije Mitrinovic during and just after the Great War in London. In the introductory part, the ideas that influenced him in his youth are analysed, particularly his change of focus from national to universal topics that developed in the period between 1911 and 1914, during his stays in Rome and Munich. His association with the Serbian Legation in London has been analysed with some new archival sources that demonstrate that he had very complex relations with the Serbian Foreign Ministry during the Great War. A special focus has been put on his cooling relations with Serbian and Yugoslav émigrés in London. This has been attributed to his pacifism, cosmopolitanism and conscientious objection to the war, all of which were in direct collision with the war propaganda of the belligerent states. His focus on art, particularly on the art of Ivan Meštrović, has been interpreted as his way to circumvent participation in the war propaganda, which he was expected to do as someone who was occasionally supported by the Legation of Serbia. His two London circles were described. The first one included writer Stephen Graham, and young theologian Father Nikolai Velimirovich. His second circle included artist Philip Mairet and Mrs Helen Soden. Finally, his gradual and growing influence on Alfred Orage, editor of *The New Age*, has been described. The two circles were the beginning of his “school of initiation”, the project through which he planned to train members of the future intellectual elite in Britain that could reform and change the world.

Key words: Dimitrije Mitrinovic, Stephen Graham, Father Nikolai Velimirovich, Ivan Meštrović, Philip Mairet, Alfred Orage, pacifism, cosmopolitanism, London, Great War, intellectuals and artists during wars

The life of Dimitrije Mitrinovic (1887–1953) experienced a turning point in 1914 when he escaped to England to avoid the war. He had no plans at all to stay in the United Kingdom, yet a set of circumstances made him continue to live there till his death in 1953. Serbian émigré writer Nenad Petrovich (Petrović)² divided his life into two “completely separate parts”. During the first period, he “enthusiastically participated in the Serbian nationalist movement and its aspiration to create a united state of South Slavs”, and during the longer part, which he spent in England (from 1914), he focused on problems “which surpassed narrow national frontiers and included the entire humanity, our whole planet.”³

1 This research was supported by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, Project No. 7747152, Cultural Transfer Europe-Serbia from the 19th till the 21st Century – CTES.

2 Serbian names in this paper have been transliterated mostly in the way in which contemporary British sources quoted them. Croatian and Slovene names have not been transliterated, except in quotations from primary sources.

3 Nenad Petrović, “Dimitrije Mitrinovic“, UB SC NAF 1.1.5. The file contains an English translation of his essay, originally published in Serbian: Nenad Petrović,

THE
NEW AGE
A SOCIALIST REVIEW OF RELIGION, SCIENCE, AND ART.

No. 1493] NEW SERIES Vol. XXVIII, No. 25. THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 1921. [ISSUED BY C.F.O. OF LONDON.] SEVENPENCE

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*Cover page of The New Age from April 21, 1921,
with "World Affairs" by "M. M. Cosmoi"*

I would suggest a slightly more elaborate periodisation of his life into four parts:

1. Childhood and youth, 1887–1907
2. Involvement in the so-called Young Bosnian movement and stays in Rome and Munich, 1908–1914
3. Reclusive life in London and Britain during and just after the Great War, 1914–1919
4. Activities in Britain in various capacities, as a publicist, psychologist, guru, social organiser, reformer of Europe and mankind, and beloved master, 1920–1953

Of these four periods of his life, the third is the least known. The scarcity of sources is the main reason why his biographers covered this period only in general outlines.⁴ In this paper, his third period will be analysed, including his involvement with the group around the journal *New Age*.

Mitrinovic began his public career in his twenties as a pro-Yugoslav writer in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had been under Austro-Hungarian occupation since 1878. His contributions in *Bosanska Vila*, published in

Dimitrije Mitrinovic (Windsor, Canada: Avala, 1967), p. 1. One can only disagree with the phrase "Serbian nationalist movement" since Mitrinovic was a pronounced Serbo-Croat or Yugoslav nationalist till about 1913.

4 See chapter 3, entitled "The Exile" in Andrew Rigby, *Dimitrije Mitrinović. A Biography* (York: William Sessions Ltd., 2006), 35–52.

1908–1913, and particularly in the Vienna-based journal *Žora*, made him a celebrity among revolutionary teenagers in grammar schools (gymnasia) in Bosnia. His fame in Serbian and Yugoslav cultural circles was concomitant with the national revival prompted by the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908. This political event stirred up Serbian and Croatian nationalisms, as well as Serbo-Croat or Yugoslav nationalism in this newly annexed province.

On the eve of the Great War, the notion that South-Slavs or Yugoslavs in the Habsburg Empire should come closer and unite into a special political unit or even separate from the Monarchy was increasingly gaining traction in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly among high school pupils and young people. Many Bosnian urban teenagers became caught up in pro-Yugoslav patriotic zeal and were prone to embrace anarchism and revolutionary methods. The Young Bosnian movement emerged. It consisted of loosely connected literary and revolutionary groups that advocated the national unification of Yugoslavs. In line with the ideas of Mazzini, the youth was given a central role in the task of national liberation, including the “mission of building a man of a new type”, and they saw themselves as “self-denying crusaders prepared for sacrifice.”⁵ Mitrinovic himself subscribed to these ideas, and historian Vladimir Dedijer considered Mitrinovic and Vladimir Čerina “two of the leading thinkers of the young South Slav revolutionary generation.”⁶ For Dedijer, Bosnian young revolutionaries could best be described as “primitive rebels.” The problem of Mitrinovic’s association with this movement was that he intellectually transcended the movement to whose creation he had greatly contributed. This happened during his stays in Rome (1911–13) and Munich (1913–14).

In 1911, he was entrusted with the special task of promoting the Yugoslav idea of the Serbian pavilion at the International Art Exhibition in Rome. For the Kingdom Serbia, the exhibition was a great opportunity, particularly because some Croatian and Serbian artists from the Habsburg Monarchy, in an act of political defiance, decided to exhibit their works in the Serbian pavilion.⁷ Mitrinovic was dedicated to promoting the exhibition for more than six months, and he was certainly in contact with many Italian and European artists and journalists who covered the exhibition. There is no detailed study yet of his activities there, and such a study would be more than welcome.⁸ In his contributions to the leading Belgrade literary

5 Vladimir Dedijer, *The Road to Sarajevo* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1967), 178.

6 Vladimir Dedijer, *The Road to Sarajevo*, 232.

7 On the Serbian pavillon in Rome see the official catalogue of Serbia: *Esposizione di Roma 1911. Padiglione delle belle arti del Regno di Serbia*

8 Predrag Palavestra, “Commentaries”, in Sabrana dela Dimitrija Mitrinovića [Collected Works of Dimitrije Mitrinovic, in further text SDDM] (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1991), vol. 1, 523.

journal *Srpski književni glasnik* and the Zagreb-based journal *Savremenik*, he summarised the impressions that, in his opinion, the Serbian pavilion in Rome had made.⁹ Mitrinović openly endorsed Serbo-Croatian cultural cooperation and clearly stated that, for him, they represented a single nation. He particularly praised the sculptures of Ivan Meštrović and the fragments of his future Vidovdan (Kosovo) Temple. He saw Meštrović as the artist “through whose personal consciousness the great dark consciousness of our whole nation spoke out.” In his opinion, there were two parts of the exhibition: the first was a set of superb works, mostly made by the Croatian artist, which were “good and perfect”, and the second group were mostly works by Serbs, which were “poor and undeserving of [being discussed in] criticism.”¹⁰ His comments met opposition in both Belgrade and Zagreb, and, since he had assessed very negatively many prominent artists from Serbia, he made some new adversaries in Belgrade.

In Rome, he suddenly changed his priorities. Instead of being focused on promoting Serbia, Serbian and Yugoslav nationalisms, he became fascinated with futurism. His focus on the artistic accomplishments of Yugoslavs may have facilitated this shift. The most obvious result of his Rome period is his lengthy essay on the philosophy of culture entitled “Aesthetic Contemplations”.¹¹ In the inter-war period, some avant-garde movements in Yugoslavia, like the Zenitists, took advantage of this writing for their modernist views and considered Mitrinović their teacher of discontent.¹² At the end of 1913, he wrote an essay on the aesthetical and critical theory of Benedetto Croce,¹³ which demonstrated that he had substantially disassociated himself from nationalist and local topics of his fellow revolutionary poets and activists from Bosnia.¹⁴ This break with the

9 Dimitrije Mitrinović, “Srbi i Hrvati na međunarodnoj umetničkoj izložbi u Rimu“, *Srpski književni glasnik*, vol. 27 (1911), No. 9, pp. 717–727, No. 10, pp. 802–808, No. 11, pp. 884–888; Idem, “Reprezentacija Hrvata i Srba na međunarodnoj izložbi u Rimu“, *Savremenik* (1911), vol. 6, No. 9: 223–225.

10 Dimitrije Mitrinović, “Reprezentacija Hrvata i Srba na međunarodnoj izložbi u Rimu“, *Savremenik* (1911), vol. 6, No. 9: 223–225; No. 10: 564–569. Republished in SDDM, vol. 1, 330–342.

11 Abridged version of this essay was published in H. C. Rutherford (ed.), *Certainly, Future. Selected Writings by Dimitrije Mitrinovic*, East European Monographs No. 222 (Boulder CO: distributed by Columbia University Press, 1987), 17–43. The full content was reproduced in Mitrinović’s collected works in Serbo-Croat: in *Sabrana djela Dimitrija Mitrinovića* [SDDM], edited by Predrag Palavestra (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1991), vol. 2, 91–138.

12 Predrag Palavestra (ed.), SDDM, vol. 2, 265.

13 Dimitrije Mitrinović, “Prevrat Kročevov, ili o estetici intuicije“, *Delo* [Belgrade] (April 1914), vol. 71, No. 1: pp. 89–95; (June 1914), Vol. 71, No. 3: pp. 389–394.

14 Predrag Palavestra, “Sudbina i delo Dimitrija Mitrinovića“ [Destiny and Work of Dimitrije Mitrinovic], in SDDM, vol. 1, 54.

MÜNCHEN, Datum des Poststempels.

Euer Hochwohlgeboren

gestalte ich mir zu dem am Freitag, 27. Februar cr. abends 8 Uhr im
grossen Saale des Museums stattfindenden Vortrag mit Lichtbildern von

Dimitrije Mitrinovic

Kandinsky und die Neue Kunst
oder
die Erstürmung des Morgen'

aufmerksam zu machen. Der Vortrag wird nicht nur die *Neue
Kunst* behandeln, sondern die geistige Entwicklung unserer Zeit in
ihrem organischen Zusammenhang mit der Vergangenheit.

Hochachtungsvoll

Otto Bauer.

Ausser den Lichtbildern werden Originalgemälde von Kandinsky gezeigt

Karten zu Mk. 4.10, 3.10, 2.05, 1.50, 1.— und 0.70 bei Otto Bauer,
J. S. Hof-Marktschmidgasse, Maximilianstr. 5. — Telefon 29120.

*Announcement of Otto Bauer on Mitrinovic's lecture "Kandinsky and New Art"
held in Munich on February 27, 1914*

national idea was simultaneous with a series of texts critical of his works in the Belgrade and Zagreb press. Therefore, it is not surprising that, on the very eve of the Great War, he reduced contacts even with the Serbian and Yugoslav colonies in Munich which, in his opinion, lived "in a superficial and empty way".¹⁵

Since his Rome period, Mitrinovic's mission became to endeavour to answer three questions that he repeatedly posed, and they were:

Who are we?

What is humanity's purpose?

How may mankind be reformed?

His original answer to the first question was: "we are Yugoslavs." That answer was a blend of national and social aspirations. He wanted self-rule for the Habsburg Yugoslavs, but also hoped, together with other "Young Bosnians", that social emancipation would follow. The Yugoslav idea remained close to his heart till his death. However, during his Munich/German period (1913–14), "Yugoslavs" became only one rung on the ladder of humanity that was to facilitate the final unification of mankind. In 1914, Mitrinovic had very intensive experience of socialising and corresponding with persons whom he identified as potential cultural leaders of his age (Wassily Kandinsky, Eric Gutkind, S. Przybyszewski, and others). They would be the intellectual élite that could transform the

15 Ibid, 58.

Instituti: Za Organizaciju

- Centralni Redakcioni i Direkcioni, Berlin -

- Petrograd, London, Paris, Rim, Beograd.

New York, (Peking, Tokio) - Melbourne

Srednjoevropska, Buenos Aires, Madrid.

Kalkuta - S. Francisco, -

naše o členovima i truditi se Almanaha,

- da se može

svakom redniku jedne

strane: njegove zadatke,

ideje, i meštiti u najzoru

potrebno

Berlin -

Zemljani -

Kropki Redakcija

interakcija zajedno

ilustracija

redakcija

redakcija

redakcija

redakcija

redakcija

Originally planned offices around the globe of the Yearbook.
A draft from 1914. NAF 1/4/13

world. He espoused the view of the *Blaue Reiter* group that modern art and political revolution were the same thing. He planned to prepare a monograph that would be a sequel to the first yearbook of the Blue Rider and would be entitled *Towards the Mankind of the Future through Aryan Europe*.¹⁶ This yearbook was supposed to include articles in major European and Asian languages and was seen as a “parliament of ideas” that could even help formulate a general policy of mankind. Mitrinovic was supposed to be its general editor (Hauptgeschäftsträger) in an editorial board that would include Gutkind and Kandinsky.

The three areas that the *Yearbook* was to cover were politics and society, philosophy and critique, and literature and art. His ambition was to gather many persons of reputation including Rosa Luxemburg, Upton Sinclair, Herbert George Wells, Henri Bergson, Dimitry Merezhkovsky, Tomáš Masaryk, Giovanni Papini, Rabindranath Tagore etc. The seat of the editorial board would be in Berlin, with branch offices in Saint Petersburg, London, Paris, Rome, Belgrade, New York, Peking (Beijing), Tokyo, Melbourne, Buenos Aires, Madrid, Calcutta and San Francisco.¹⁷ It is clear that, on the very eve of the Great War, he considered Berlin the global cultural centre, and his capricious omission of Vienna and generous inclusion of Belgrade is a testament to his involvement with the Yugoslav national programme.

A draft of the first proclamation of the International Yearbook for Cultural Politics has been preserved.¹⁸ It clarifies that by “the divine and human Europe” he meant Latin, Germanic, Slavic and Anglo-Saxon Europe, which should be united with America, Australia and India. In terms of global horizons from 1914, it was an inclusive idea limited by the echoes of the then influential Hegelian and Eurocentric concepts, which viewed many non-European nations (and even some European) as “non-historic.” It was also written at the moment when European colonialism reached its peak and when major European powers and the United States displayed total technological and financial domination over the rest of the world. However, many elements in the programme were anti-colonial in their spirit. For instance, the following sentences anticipate universal citizenship: “But this humanity can only create itself as an alliance (Bund) of European Republics. This republic of European Aryandom can only be

16 Luisa Passerini, *Europe in Love. Love in Europe* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1999), 106–107.

17 P. Palavestra, *Dogma i utopija Dimitrija Mitrinovića* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2003, 2nd enlarged ed.), 257–258.

18 “Die arische Europa. Internationales Jahrbuch für Kulturpolitik. Entwurf eines ersten Aufrufes“ (9 typed pages). English translation included: “Aryan Europe. International Year Book for Kulturpolitik. Draft of a first proclamation”, UB NAF 1/4/11.

created as a socialist community. The ideal state and the ideal community is nevertheless continued as the endless freedom of world citizenship.”¹⁹

In other words, there were two steps for the mankind of future: the first was the Alliance of European Republics, and the second world citizenship. The project, therefore, transcended colonialism, but it borrowed concepts from a Eurocentric age. The “Aryan” in the whole project and in Mitrinovic’s writings was slightly more comprehensive than Indo-European, another very Eurocentric term. Since the programme had global aspirations, its main weakness was that it failed to address large portions of mankind, like the peoples of Sub-Saharan Africa and the Arabs.²⁰ Writing about the League of Nations and internationalists, Mark Mazower remarked that many of them were “within the civilizational and racial limitations of the age, globalists.”²¹ Mitrinovic was just another one of those who had to design their versions of internationalism and universalism within the existing concepts, which had multiple limitations in terms of their inclusiveness.

Mitrinovic should be given credit for understanding the importance of peace for the future of Europe and the world. He insisted that “deepening of our own humanity to be worthy of Europe” could not be achieved “until there is an end to European suicide in mutual strife and constant threat of war.”²²

His enchantment with the transcendental is very present in the programme and makes it difficult to interpret certain passages. One should have in mind that in 1914 he became fascinated with the German mystical philosopher Eric Gutkind and his book *Sidereal Birth*. From that moment till his death, he considered Gutkind one of the greatest contemporary minds and later called him one of the “prophets of revelation”. Mitrinovic’s adherence to German expressionism and its transcendentalism paved the way for this fascination with Gutkind, and the two men shared very complex, esoteric and eccentric styles. One wonders if, in both cases, the reason for that was their aspiration to establish their own esoteric schools in which texts could not be fully understood without the master’s clarification.

It was in the midst of his preparations for the publication of the ambitious *Yearbook* that the Sarajevo Assassination took place. The July Crisis of 1914 followed, and it reached its climax when Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on July 28.

19 “Aryan Europe. International Year Book for Kulturpolitik. Draft of a first proclamation”, UB NAF 1/4/11, p. 5.

20 References to branch offices in Beijing/Peking and Tokyo indicate that the Chinese and Japanese cultures were also included.

21 Mark Mazower, *Governing the World. The History of an Idea* (London: Penguin, 2012), 116.

22 UB NAF 1/4/11, p. 2.

Relations with the Legation of Serbia in London and with Yugoslavs in the Entente countries

When the war was declared on Serbia, Mitrinovic was in Berlin. Since July 18, he had been a guest of the Gutkind family. His previous association with the Government of Serbia was a publicly known fact since he had also written about the Serbian pavilion in Rome for some German publications. He had to decide where to go, and Britain was only one of his options. Kandinsky suggested Russia to him as a possible sanctuary,²³ but he opted for Britain. Gutkind's mother gave him the money to pay for a one-way train ticket to London.²⁴

He travelled to Britain totally penniless. He did not even have five pounds to show to an immigration officer at Dover. He realised that he had to have this amount of money on his trip by boat to Britain, and a black passenger lent him that amount.²⁵ He knew only two addresses in London. One was of Max Gysi, editor and translator of some of Rudolf Steiner's books, and a friend of Eric Gutkind. Immediately upon his arrival he tried to continue his work on the preparations of the *Yearbook*. On August 16 1914, he wrote to Prince Kropotkin about that issue, and, in August, he also wrote to Frederik Van Eaden,²⁶ but soon he had to deal with practical issues and find a job to do.

At the time of his arrival in Britain, he enjoyed a very good reputation in Yugoslav literary circles, but he also had many opponents among those whom he criticised in his papers in the field of literary and art critique. Palavestra summarised his reputation in his assessment that among the Young Bosnia writers Mitrinovic was "one of the most important, most dynamic and most influential figures", and that he was "a critic and poet rightfully considered by the Young Bosnia writers as a reliable authority on literature and art."²⁷ He had all the prerequisites to become one of the most important champions of Yugoslavism in Britain, but he also had several disadvantages.

Mitrinovic was a subject of Austria-Hungary, the country against which the United Kingdom declared war on August 12, 1914. To legalise his stay in Britain, at some point, he got associated with the Serbian Legation. In September/October 1914, he seems to have been engaged as

23 Palavestra, *Dogma i utopija*, 40.

24 "An Outline of the Life of Dimitrije Mitrinovic", University Library Svetozar Marković, Special Collections [ULSM SC].

25 "An Outline of the Life of Dimitrije Mitrinovic", ULSM SC.

26 UB NAF, 1/4/11.

27 Predrag Palavestra, "Young Bosnia: Literary Action 1908–1914", *Balkanica*, Vol. 41 (2010), 162–163.

a clerk at the Serbian Legation in London. In his letter dated November 16, 1914, to Serbian Prime Minister Nikola Pashich (Pašić), he thanked him and the Serbian minister in London for allowing him to become a clerk by his decision of September 14, but he informed him that he had realised he was not capable of doing office work, and suggested that he should devote himself to “propagating Yugoslav cultural and political thought among peoples that could be of assistance to Serbia and to Yugoslavism.”²⁸

In my recent research I have suggested that Yugoslavism of the early 20th century did not really emerge before 1904/05 and that it became a potent force only after the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary in 1908. Moreover, it turned into a massive movement among the South Slavs of Austria-Hungary only after the Balkan Wars (1912/13) and was even then limited to younger generations.²⁹ Mitrinovic was one of the canonisers of Yugoslavism, and he very actively participated in the creation of this movement and designing the mood in the cultural and literary circles that promoted the cultural and ethnic unity of Serbs and Croats.

Two days after he had informed the Serbian Prime Minister of his resignation as a clerk, he wrote to Slavko Grouitch (Grujić), former chargé d'affaires of Serbia in London (1908–1914). Grouitch was married to Mabel, née Gordon-Dunlop who was very active in the Red Cross and came from a prominent American family. The Grouitchs were about to leave for the United States, and Mitrinovic suggested that he should be sent to the United States to promote Yugoslav propaganda there, but nothing came of this proposal.³⁰ Historian Milorad Ekmečić was the first to notice that, in spite of his offers, there were no records that the government of Serbia had “ever engaged Mitrinovic for any job of this kind.”³¹

At some point, he began receiving monthly financial assistance from the Legation of Serbia in London. In mid-April 1915, the Serbian government wired 450 dinars for Mitrinovic for the second trimester of 1915 (April-June), in other words, he was receiving 150 dinars per month. The document sent from Niš, the provisional war capital of Serbia, is the

28 Mitrinovic to Nikola Pashitch, London, November 3 [16], 1914. Published in SD DM, vol. 2, 245–246.

29 Slobodan G. Markovich, “Yugoslav Freemasonry and Yugoslavism as a Civil Religion”, in Idem (ed.), *Freemasonry in Southeast Europe from the 19th to the 21st Centuries* (Belgrade: IES and Zepter Book World, 2020), 125–130.

30 Dimitrije Mitrinovic to Slavko Grouitch, London, November 5 [18], 1914. Published in SD DM, vol. 2, 246–249.

31 Milorad Ekmečić, *Ratni ciljevi Srbije* (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1973), 319–320.

printed form of a receipt with the amount of his “salary” handwritten on it.³² On the back of the document, an official of the Serbian Legation in London stated that Mitrinovic got the amount “as a stipend”.³³ This suggests that he did not have an official duty but was simply put on the payroll of the Serbian Government through the Serbian Legation in London. This chronologically matches the period when he was engaged in assisting the exhibition of Ivan Meštrović at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and when he had certain duties within the Yugoslav Committee. During his stay in Paris in May 1915, he received 150 dinars of his monthly support for May from the Serbian Legation in Paris, and the Serbian minister in Paris Vesnitch (Vesnić) later asked the Legation in London to reimburse this sum.³⁴

When the Yugoslav Committee was established in 1915, its seat was in London. It gathered prominent South-Slav political activists from the Dual Monarchy who served as unofficial political representatives of the Habsburg South Slavs in the Entente powers. Mitrinovic was too young to become a full member and, in April 1915, he became a member of the Committee’s cultural section together with the famous sculptor Ivan Meštrović.³⁵

It is not clear when he received a Serbian passport, but he must have got it no later than May 1915, when he travelled to Geneva and Paris. That, however, does not mean that he also received Serbian citizenship. During the Great War, the Serbian Legation helped prominent South Slavs to travel between the Entente countries by giving them Serbian passports. During his visit to Geneva, he came into conflict with Bozha Markovich (Boža Marković), professor of the University of Belgrade. Mitrinovic reported to London that Serbian emigrants in Geneva

32 At that time, the exchange rate of French francs and Serbian dinars was based on parity, and 150 dinars were equivalent to 150 francs.

33 Bursar of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Serbia to the Serbian Legation in London, Niš, April 1 [14], 1915, AS KSPL [Archives of Serbia, Royal Serbian Legation in London], f II P 1231/1915. The phrase in Serbian is “na ime blagodejanja.” The meaning of *blagodejanje*, now an obsolete word, was “assistance for poor, but good students; stipend; assistance in general.” *Rečnik srpskohrvatskog književnog jezika* [Dictionary of the Serbocroat Literary Language], vol. 1 letters A-E] (Novi Sad and Zagreb, 1967), 214.

34 Vesnitch to the Serbian Legation in London, Paris, May 5 [18], 1915, AS KSPL, f II P 1231/1915. Mitrinovic signed a receipt on May 3 [16], 1915 that he had received 150 francs in gold in Paris. The Serbian Legation in Paris got back its loan for Mitrinovic in September or October 1915. Vesnitch to the Serbian Legation in London, Paris, Sep. 25 [Oct. 8], 1915, AS KSPL, f II P 1231/1915.

35 Pavle Popović, *Iz dnevnika* [Diary], collected works of Pavle Popović, vol. 11 (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2001), under April 14, 1915, p. 159.

were very much against Croatian emigrants there. On May 20/June 3, 1915, Bozha Markovich complained to the special Serbian envoy Pavle Popovic that Mitrinovic's behaviour in Geneva was "scandalous" and that he was "a scoundrel and scum."³⁶ Markovich, whom Mitrinovic knew from pre-war Belgrade, had been sent by the Serbian Government to run the Serbian Press Bureau. The Bureau had a special task in promoting the Yugoslav idea in the Entente and neutral countries. Not all Serbian envoys in the Entente and neutral countries were equally enthusiastic about the prospects of a future joint state of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, but Bozha Markovich was definitely a staunch proponent of future Yugoslavia. As a champion of Yugoslavism, Mitrinovic was supposed to be more than a welcome associate of the Bureau and Markovich. However, by the spring of 1915, he was in the worst possible relations with the Bureau and its chief.

On a personal level, he came into conflict with some of his very close associates. Till the outbreak of the war, he was a very close friend with the Croatian pro-Yugoslav poet Tin Ujević, who harboured rather leftist political ideas. During the war, Ujević lived in Paris, where he frequently visited Café da la Rotonde, at the corner of Boulevard du Montparnasse and Boulevard Raspail, and from there he went to see Leo Trotsky together with the Bosnian revolutionary Vladimir Gachinovich (Gaćinović).³⁷ At the end of 1915, when Mitrinovic visited Paris, he was still a close friend with Ujević. Something happened during this stay that completely ruined their relations. Mitrinovic left France on February 26, 1916. P. Palavestra was the first to notice that he left Paris only one day after Ujević had completed his poem "Daily Lament" (*Svakidašnja jadikovka*).³⁸ One wonders if the following lines from this famous poem of despair and resignation refer to Ujević's friend Dimitri:

Who can he tell his troubles to
when no-one's there to hear his call,
not even brother wanderers?³⁹

More than two years later, Ujević mentioned him in a letter in which he recalled their meetings in Zagreb cafés, and gave recollections of their last meetings in Paris in early 1916: "Mr. Dimitri Mitrinovitch, whom I

36 Pavle Popović, *Iz dnevnika*, entry under May 20, 1915, p. 169.

37 Tin Ujević, "Uz spomenicu Vladimira Gaćinovića", in Tin Ujević, *Autobiografski spisi, pisma, intervjui*, (Zagreb: Znanje, 1966), 33.

38 P. Palavestra, *Dogma i utopija Dimitrija Mitrinovića*, 318.

39 Quoted from the web-site of the Croatian Studies Foundation. Translation by Richard Berengarten and Daša Marić (2013). <https://www.croatianstudiesfoundation.com.au/2014/10/25/croatian-poets-tin-ujevic-daily-lament/>

denounced to Mr. Vesnich⁴⁰ because of his suspicious actions, draws up a whole program of readings for me, beginning with metaphysics and theology, and ending with Indianism⁴¹ and Celtic studies.”⁴²

Gachinovich died under very dubious circumstances, and after the war, a memory book was published in his honour. Reviewing that book in 1921, Ujević noticed: “I have to admit that to me, in spite of all his delusions, the revolutionary democrat Gachinovich, was closer, more comprehensible and more akin, than, for instance, the occultist, spiritist, hypnotiser and Eastern mystagogue Mitr[in]ović.”⁴³ One could say that the break with Ujević symbolically meant the end of his involvement with Serbian and Yugoslav organisations.

Due to personal animosities, the Yugoslav Committee was in total disarray at that time, and its Paris meeting held on February 16–24, 1916 demonstrated deep divisions.⁴⁴ Meštrović and Father Nikolai Velimirović were also present in Paris at the meeting of the Yugoslav Committee. Father Nikolai helped Mitrović to get financial support from the Serbian Legation in Paris for the preparation of a publication.

The break with Ujević and very poor relations within the Yugoslav Committee contributed to his disillusionment with the Yugoslav emigration. One should recall that he was already in poor relations with Serbian and Yugoslav colonies in Munich in 1914. He remained deeply loyal to the Yugoslav idea till the end of his life, but in his further actions he constantly avoided involvement with any political organisations that advocated Serbian or Yugoslav nationalism. This seclusion helped him to focus his efforts on recruiting new disciples in Britain. It is quite possible that he unsuccessfully tried to do the same with Ujević.

A prolific author till 1914, he wrote no pamphlets, articles or booklets during the Great War, at the time when such publications with Serbian and South-Slav topics mushroomed in Britain and were heavily funded by the Serbian government and in demand by British publishers.

Upon his arrival to Britain, Mitrović certainly needed some time to learn English, but he seems to have mastered it quite well by the time of the Meštrović exhibition in June 1915. With the exception of Father

40 Serbian minister in Paris.

41 The Original letter is in French and mentions “l’indianisme” as reference to Mitrović’s interest in India.

42 Tin Ujević to Milostislav Bartulica, Paris, June 14, 1918. In Tin Ujević, *Autobiografski spisi, pisma, intervjui*, Collected Works of Tin Ujević, vol. 14 (Zagreb: Znanje, 1966), 249–250.

43 Tin Ujević, “Uz spomenicu Vladimira Gaćinovića”, 36.

44 Bogumil Vošnjak, *U borbi za ujedinjenu narodnu državu* (Ljubljana, Belgrade and Zagreb, 1928), 95–104; Pavle Popović, *Iz dnevnika*, 368–387.

Nikolai Velimirovich, the Serbian emigrants in London did not speak English or were only beginning to learn it. This placed Mitrinovic in a very good position, but he did not take that advantage. It is conspicuous that he is not mentioned in a single letter by Robert William Seton-Watson, who corresponded with all leading Serbs and Yugoslavs who were in London during the Great War. The only Yugoslav activity in which his name may be detected is that he signed a draft memorandum in London in May 1915 on the future unification of South Slavs together with the members of the Yugoslav Committee Frano Supilo, Hinko Hinković, Ante Trumbić, Franko Potočnjak, Ivan Meštrović and others.⁴⁵

In October 1915, the first issue of *The Southern Slav Bulletin* was published in London. It was a periodical of the Yugoslav Committee, originally co-edited by Milan Marjanović and Srgjan Tucić, and from August 1916 by Tucić alone. Mitrinovic wrote the afterword for Tucić's book and was himself a member of the Committee's cultural section. The journal covered news on South Slav lands and Serbia, but also reported on the activities of pro-Yugoslav writers and published some of their contributions. Yet, Mitrinovic was never mentioned in *The Southern Slav Bulletin*, which is another testimony to how much he had distanced himself from the rest of the Yugoslav and Serbian colony. The only person from this group with whom he maintained close relations was Father Nikolai Velimirovich, who became a celebrity in Britain during the war owing to his highly appraised sermons. His association with Velimirovich will be covered later.

Although Mitrinovic became increasingly isolated, he occasionally interacted with the Yugoslav colony, but mostly through Father Nikolai. A Slovene member of the Yugoslav Committee, Bogumil Vošnjak, published his war-time memoirs in 1928, and his war-time diary appeared in 1994. All references to Mitrinovic in his *Diary* are from February 1917. Vošnjak mentions a dinner he had, on February 11, 1917, in the Serbian restaurant, an inn in old London where Serbian food was served. The dinner was attended by Father Nikolai Velimirovich, Serbian historian Jovan Radonich, Serbian politician Jovan Banjanin, Croatian writer Josip Kosor and Mitrinovic. Four days later, Vošnjak had a meeting with George Bell, secretary of the archbishop of Canterbury, Father Nikolai and Mitrinovic. At that meeting, Mitrinovic claimed that every Yugoslav statesman had to know that the Yugoslavs were "a mixture of great Eastern and Western peoples", that he "fantasised about Egyptians and Assyrians", and that he claimed that "Meštrović was a full Assyrian." On more practical matters, Mitrinovic was of the opinion that the so-called High Church, the elitist

45 R. W. Seton-Watson and the Yugoslavs. *Correspondence 1906-1940*, vol. 1: 1906-1918 (London and Zagreb: British Academy and the Institute of Croatian History, 1976), 222.

The Temple of Serbia; or on the li-
vilisation of Meštrović.

(I subscribed to Lord Robert [Loul])
Representatives of the University,
my esteemed audience!

I feel more honours than I am
able to express, and feel great,
and memorable joy of my life in intro-
ducing, through our assembly here,
Ivan Meštrović to Britain. The Ar-
tist has spoken to Britain for him-
self through his Exhibition in South
Kensington, and Lord Robert [Loul] pre-
sented him, ~~and~~ revealed the meaning
of his coming to En this country. ~~He~~
~~is a admirable man.~~ Here,
gentle men, in the Leeds exhibition, they
is to be open soon, and in our recep-
tion to-day Ivan Meštrović is once
more acknowledged by English peo-
ple; it is ^{from} a University of England,
and ~~is~~ ^{now} from the race itself
that Serbia receives homage. If any

Mitrinovic's lecture "The Temple of Serbia; or on the Civilisation of Meštrović"
delivered at the University of Leeds on October 5, 1915, NAF 1/3/2

part of the Church of England, should be copied. Finally, on February 22, Mitrinovic spoke of Yugoslav ethics in the Serbian restaurant. On that occasion, Father Nikolai teased him that, during his lecture on Meštrović in Leeds, he spoke of Assyrians and Egyptians and that "next to him sat Meštrović, a small Dalmatian peasant, who understood nothing about his art."⁴⁶ It is interesting to note that Vošnjak in his memoirs called Mi-

46 Bogumil Vošnjak, *Dnevnik iz prve svetovne vojne* [Diary from the First World War] (Ljubljana: Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, 1994), 175–76, 178.

trinovic “a well-known Christian aesthete”⁴⁷, which indicates how much his original image of a revolutionary from Bosnia and Herzegovina had changed in only two and a half years.

Not only was Mitrinovic in a kind of self-imposed exile, but even prominent Serbian intellectuals who were in London concomitantly with him decided to exclude his name from the annals of Serbian and Yugoslav cultures. Pavle Popovich (Popović) had a unique opportunity to have his *Yugoslav Literature* in Serbo-Croat published by Cambridge University Press. He finished his book in December 1917. The last section of the book is entitled “20th Century”. In it, Popovich discusses writers, poets and literary critics among Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. More prominent authors were treated in detail and the less prominent were listed. Mitrinovic, whom Popovich knew personally quite well, and who, in 1911–13, wrote five contributions on art criticism for *Srpski književni glasnik*, the journal established by Pavle’s brother Bogdan Popovich, was not mentioned even once in this book. It is more than striking that, in the first history of Yugoslav literature, the author whose contribution to Yugoslavism was crucial was not given a single line!⁴⁸

The same happened with the journal *Misao* (Thought), launched in London by Serbian emigrants and issued between September 1918 and June 1919. The journal published exactly the kind of essays that Mitrinovic used to write till 1914, but he was also quite conspicuously absent from it.⁴⁹ It is difficult to judge how much Mitrinovic contributed to this exclusion himself and how much prominent members of the Serbian colony distanced themselves from him. However, the final result is clear. It was a rather striking mutual alienation that gradually developed in 1916–18.

The (self-)exclusion that took place in 1916 was very likely deepened by a failed project that Mitrinovic undertook in order to secure an income. In January 1916, during his stay in Paris, he received 3,000 francs from the Serbian Legation in Paris “to prepare his work”.⁵⁰ By early 1917, no publication had appeared, and, in April 1917, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Serbia requested from the Serbian Legation in London to explain what had happened, and clarified that the Legation in Paris reported that

47 B. Vošnjak, *U borbi za ujedinjenu narodnu državu*, 187.

48 Pavle Popović, *Jugoslovenska književnost* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1918).

49 No. 6 includes the list of the contributors of the journal. Among them were Bogdan and Pavle Popović, Jovan Cvijić, Tihomir Djordjević, Dragutin Subotić, Momčilo Selesković, Ivan Meštrović and several prominent Brits, including Sir Arthur Evans and Neville Forbes, *Misao* [London] (May-June 1919). The list of contributors was published on the back covers.

50 The word “delo” is used in the letter, which means work and alludes to a book.

the amount had been given on the recommendation of Father Nikolai, to whom the matter “was presented as urgent.”⁵¹ The Serbian Minister in London Jovan Jovanovitch (Jovanović) requested that Father Nikolai should be interviewed about that. However, Mitrinovic reported himself that he “persistently” worked on the book, but that he faced unexpected great difficulties and could not offer any deadline. Therefore, he suggested giving the sum back to the Legation and offered 100 British pounds, at the time equivalent to 2,715 francs. He explained that he had spent the remaining 300 francs “for the translation of various manuscripts, and for buying and giving books that my associates need for their information.”⁵² Since Mitrinovic mentions associates, one can assume that the publication he planned was something that demanded collective work.

It is difficult to imagine that Mitrinovic was able to raise this amount, equivalent to the 18 monthly stipends from 1915, on his own. Since Father Nikolai was implicated in this affair, one could speculate that he helped him, in one way or another, to solve the problem. This affair could not have remained a secret because the Serbian minister Jovanovitch had a less than favourable opinion of both Father Nikolai and Mitrinovic. Therefore, one can assume that it negatively affected Dimitri’s reputation, which additionally explains his absence from the official Serbian and Yugoslav circles in 1916–18.

Associates of NAF prepared a chronology of Mitrinovic’s life for the period 1914–19. In it, there is a reference under 1918 that he “helped with the publication of *The South Slav Monuments*”, and that Niko Županić also helped its preparation.⁵³ He is also supposed to have participated in the arrangements for the publication of *Natural Philosophy* by the Ragusan philosopher and scientist Ruggiero Boscovitch in November 1919.⁵⁴ In April 1920, he indeed checked into the Reading Room of the British Museum and ordered Boscovitch’s book *Elementorum Universae Matheseos* from 1757. Archival sources demonstrate Father Nikolai’s involvement in both

51 Treasurer of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Serbia to the Serbian Legation in London, Corfu, 12/25 April 1917, AS, KSPL, Pov. F I r1181/1917.

52 Mitrinovic’s handwritten explanation, and the reply of the Serbian Legation in London to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are written on the back of the letter sent from Corfu. Ibid.

53 The luxurious book was edited and financed by the American inventor and millionaire of Serbian origin Michael Pupin. Father Nikolai is mentioned in the Post scriptum, written by Pupin in October 1917, as she person who arranged and supervised the publication of the book in England, and Županić prepared the geological tables of Serbian kings and a map of the South Slav territory. Mitrinovic has not mentioned in the book. Michael J. Pupin (ed.), *The South Slav Monuments. I. Serbian Orthodox Church* (London: John Murray, 1918), 64.

54 Chronology of Dimitrije Mitrinovic, UB NAF, 1/1/6, p. 4–5.

projects, but Mitrinovic is not mentioned in any of them.⁵⁵ It may well be that Father Nikolai, after the affair in 1917 when Mitrinovic had to return the funds he had been given, had to undertake those tasks himself.

In the end, it was the Serbian philosopher Branislav Petronievich (Petronijević) who wrote a short introductory biography of Boscovitch for the bilingual edition of his *Natural Philosophy*.⁵⁶ He mentions in his autobiography that Father Nikolai planned to publish a series of works by the most important Yugoslav writers in English translation.⁵⁷ Since Mitrinovic spent some money in 1916/17 on translations, that could have been his original project. The second edition in that series was Boscovitch's *Natural Philosophy*, and that book was published "after many difficulties" in 1922 with the financial aid of the Yugoslav government.⁵⁸

In 1918, he co-operated with Dushan Popovich, secretary of the Serbian Social Democratic Party in exile. This party was very pacifist and, in that sense, was close to Mitrinovic's ideals. Popovich came to London from Stockholm and planned to make a book with Mitrinovic that would commemorate the centenary of Marx's birth. In this project, Mitrinovic again took the internationalist side of the question. While Popovich was supposed to write on Marx and Serbia, he wanted to contribute an article on "Marx as an Internationalist".⁵⁹ Throughout the war, Popovich opposed the social-patriotic stream among Serbian socialists and, since the October/November Revolution in Russia, openly advocated Bolshevik ideas.⁶⁰ However, he died in London in November 1918, before he could do anything with Mitrinovic.

It is not an easy task to make a clear estimation of Mitrinovic's ideological leanings. Winifred Fraser remembered that he originally claimed

55 On the preparation of the books see: AS, KSPL, SPA [Serbian Relief Action], f. 11, r21 and KSPL, f. IV, r10/1918. A letter from J. M. Child of the University of Manchester, dated July 25, 1920, is addressed to "Dear Sir" UB NAF catalogue suggests that it was sent to Mitrinovic. UB NAF, 1/7/8/13. Emma Burgham, *The New Atlantis Foundation Dimitrije Mitrinovic Archive: Catalogue* (University of Bradford, Nov. 2015), 87.

56 Branislav Petronievich, "Life of Roger Joseph Boscovich", in Roger Joseph Boscovich, S.J., *A Theory of Natural Philosophy. Latin-English Edition* (Chicago and London: Open Court Publishing Company, 1922). Petronijević published a booklet during the Great War that included sections on Boscovitch. Branislav Petronievich, *Slav Achievement in Advanced Science* (London: the American Book Supply, 1917), 11–17.

57 Branislav Petronijević, *O vrednosti života* (Belgrade: Nolit, 1983), 91.

58 Petronijević, *O vrednosti života*, 92.

59 Andrew Rigby, *Dimitrije Mitrinović. A Biography* (York: William Sessions Ltd., 2006), 50–51.

60 S[ergije]. D[imitrijević]., s. v. „Popović, Dušan“, *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, vol. 6 (Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod, 1965), 555–556.

that he was a Bakuninist and not a Marxist.⁶¹ One of the first contacts he wanted to make in London in August 1914 was with the Russian anarchist Prince Kropotkin.⁶² He definitely drew some inspiration from anarchists and, in the autumn of 1922, Mitrinovic still regularly attended anarchist meetings at the Minerva Café in Bury Place.⁶³ Yet, he was not a politician and did not believe that politicians could change the world. However, in ideological terms, he flirted with socialist, anarchist and, occasionally, liberal ideas.

Conscientious objection, pacifism and anti-patriotism

It seems that Mitrinovic's escape from continental Europe to Britain had a very important practical aspect: to avoid conscription. His associates quote his letter to Van Eeden from late August 1914, in which he mentioned that he had escaped to London to avoid conscription, which is why Van Eeden labelled him "a deserter" in a letter to Henri Borel.⁶⁴

When he fled from continental Europe to Britain, he came to London with a potentially explosive legacy – his association with the Bosnian revolutionaries responsible for the murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. In the South-Slav youth literary clubs, Mitrinovic had a reputation as someone who inspired many radical Yugoslav nationalists. It appeared to be an impossible task to link him through historical sources with Gavrilo Princip and other plotters, but such a link could easily be constructed by the Austro-Hungarian authorities. That would have made him automatically unwelcome in Britain, a country that condemned the act of Princip.⁶⁵ Therefore, he had to keep a low profile when he came to Britain.

During the trial of the Sarajevo plotters in October 1914, no reference to Mitrinovic was made in any of the conspirators' testimonies, and even the prosecutors never mentioned his name. A reference to him was made only in the statement taken from Dobrosav Yevdjevich (Jevdjević) and read at the trial. The statement implies that two Sarajevo conspirators, Gavrilo Princip and Trifko Grabezh (Grabež), met the university professor Bozha Markovich for lunch and, "as far as I remember Dimi-

61 "Dimitrije Mitrinovic. Notes W.G.F.", NAF, 1/1/6, p. 1.

62 "Dimitrije Mitrinovic. Notes W.G.F.", 1/1/6, p. 2.

63 "From the note book of V.V.C.", NAF, 1/1/6. Notes of Valerie Cooper from the late 1950s, p. 3.

64 Chronology of Dimitrije Mitrinovic, UB NAF, 1/1/6, p. 2.

65 On the very negative image of Gavrilo Princip and his associates in both war time and inter-war Britain see: S. G. Markovich, "Anglo-American Views of Gavrilo Princip", *Balkanica*, vol. 46 (2015), 273–314.

trije Mitrinovic was there.”⁶⁶ Bozhidar Markovich was professor of Penal Law at the University of Belgrade and the editor of the journal *Slovenski Jug*, which advocated Yugoslav unification and was viewed in Vienna as an open opponent of the Dual Monarchy. Among Bosnian revolutionaries Mitrinovic was very popular and widely read and would have hardly avoided detention and trials had he stayed in Austria-Hungary.

British writer Stephen Graham married Mitrinovic’s sister Vera in 1956. He also wrote a documentary novel on the Sarajevo Assassination and for that purpose interviewed some of the plotters and their associates.⁶⁷ Therefore, he was probably the best-informed person on the potential involvement of Mitrinovic with the plans of the Bosnian schoolboys to assassinate Archduke Franz Ferdinand. He published his memoirs 11 years after the death of Mitrinovic, and in them he concluded that Mitrinovic was “slightly involved in the schoolboy conspiracy of Sarajevo”, but then added that he was “a man of words, not of action, a philosopher dedicated to the coming unity of the churches and of mankind.”⁶⁸ But, any hint even of an indirect involvement would certainly have led to his arrest, and therefore his panicked escape from continental Europe was well justified.

Before the Great War, Serbia was not at all popular in Britain due to the event of 1903, when the Belgrade regicide took place.⁶⁹ However, Mitrinovic was to witness an unprecedented interest in Serbia and sympathy for this country in Britain, which gradually developed in late 1914 and early 1915. British public opinion fully identified with Serbia and her sufferings during the typhoid epidemic, in early 1915, when hundreds of British nurses, many of them from Scotland, came to Serbia to alleviate the immense suffering of the local population. From the end of 1915, British mainstream war propaganda portrayed Serbia as a great martyr and pro-Serbian euphoria reached its climax in April-July 1916.⁷⁰ In early 1916, the remnants of the Serbian Army were gathered and reorganised by the Entente Powers and dispatched to the Macedonian Front. From that moment, the reorganised Serbian Army was also praised and eulogised.

66 Vojislav Bogičević (ed.), *Sarajevski atentat. Izvorne stenografske bilješke sa glavne rasprave protiv Gavrila Principa i drugova, održane u Sarajevu 1914. g.* (Sarajevo: Državni arhiv NR BiH, 1954), 290.

67 Stephen Graham, *St. Vitus Day* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1931).

68 Stephen Graham, *Part of the Wonderful Scene. An Autobiography* (London: Collins, 1964), 102.

69 About British reactions to the Belgrade regicide of June 1903 see: Slobodan G. Markovich, *British Perceptions of Serbia and the Balkans, 1903–1906* (Paris: Dialogue, 2000).

70 See about this in S. G. Markovich, “British-Serbian Cultural and Political Relations, 1784–1918”, in Idem (ed.), *British-Serbian Relations from the 18th to the 21st Centuries* (Belgrade: Zepher Book World, 2018), 65–81, 93–103.

There is a clear discrepancy between the extraordinary activities of Father Nikolai Velimirovich and Pavle Popovich in promoting Serbia and the future Yugoslavia in the British press, and Mitrinovic's absenteeism. Instead of praising Serbian soldiers and Serbia's army, he was rather focused on her potential synthetic mission to facilitate the unification of South Slavs. His pacifism was clearly voiced in his rare appearances but was also conveniently hidden behind artistic phrases and projects.

It is very striking that, throughout the Great War, Mitrinovic refrained from the usual statements of European intellectuals of that age in support of the armies of their respective nation-states. This is even more striking given that he was in emigration and was diplomatically protected and financed by Serbia. When he came to Paris in late 1915, he tried to establish contacts with French intellectuals of a pacifist persuasion. A draft of the letter he intended to send to Ed. Schuré, Anatole France, Ch. Richet and Henri Bergson, dated February 12–13, 1916, mentioned "the production of an *Almanac of Cosmopolitan Pacifism*."⁷¹

There was another important reason why Mitrinovic had to keep a low profile in Britain. He was 27 years old when he came to Britain. In other words, he was of the perfect age for conscription. It was to be expected from a Yugoslav nationalist to eagerly aspire to join the Serbian Army, but there are no records that would suggest that Mitrinovic ever had such intentions. Some influential Brits noticed this fact, including Ronald Burrows, the most prominent Hellenophile in London, who "spoke bitterly" to the Serbian professor Pavle Popovich about Mitrinovic in this respect.⁷² Indeed, Mitrinovic's life is full of contradictions, and one such contradiction was the fusion that he made between some sort of revolution and pacifism. Graham noted that Dimitri "was a born conspirator, which is curious considering that his life was so pacific."⁷³

In 1916–18, the minister plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Serbia in London was the Serbian politician Jovan Jovanovitch, nicknamed Pigeon. A very rich collection of documents and letters of J. Jovanovitch has been preserved, but there is nothing on Mitrinovic in them.⁷⁴ His diary, which mostly covers the years of the Great War, mentions Mitrinovic only twice, and both references are related to his pacifism. In January 1918, he spoke with Sir Alfred Mond, and, on that occasion,

71 "Dimitrije Mitrinovic. Notes W.G.F.", 1/1/6, p. 3. Cf. A. Rigby, *Dimitrije Mitrinović. A Biography*, 42.

72 Diary of Pavle Popovich, under January 23, 1917, p. 626

73 *Part of the Wonderful Scene*, p. 121.

74 A detailed inventory of his collection in 137 pages does not mention Mitrinovic a single time. See Ksenija Miroslavljević, *Inventar Afj 80. Zbirka Jovan Jovanović Pižon*, Archives of Yugoslavia.

Mond complained about a meeting of pacifists in Nottingham. The Serbian minister clarified in his diary, in parentheses, that the meeting was attended, among others, by the Bolshevik ambassador Litvinov, D. Mitrinovic, McDonald, and English socialists.⁷⁵ Another entry mentions a conversation that took place just after the war ended. On that occasion, Sir R. Graham informed the Serbian minister in London that the War Office had a file on Father Nikolai Velimirovich, who worked with pacifists during the war, and that Mitrinovic was found in the same company.⁷⁶

His cosmopolitanism also meant that, in the midst of the war, he was able to transcend the wartime antagonisms between European nations, something that was in total contradiction with the prevailing spirit in Europe during the Great War. Leading European intellectuals totally identified with the war aims of their home countries to a degree that seems almost shocking from the perspectives of post-WW2 Europe.⁷⁷ At some point during the war, probably in 1916, Philip Mairet organised a meeting between Patrick Geddes and Mitrinovic. On that occasion, the latter gave his views of the events in Europe, and claimed that the European continent, “only a Western end of Eurasia”, was the place where different nations reached their culs-de-sac, separated “by land and sea frontiers over which they quarrel themselves into separate haughty *nations*.” Every nation would like to be the “world saviour”, but Mitrinovic warned:

There will be no salvation now; not until they have paid their huge debts to the rest of mankind, to each other and to their God. First they must all be brought down, frustrated, humiliated. Yes, they must all be broken...⁷⁸

Geddes, a person of wide horizons, who would later become Mitrinovic’s close associate, was very much shocked by his speech. One can only imagine how other contemporaries reacted to such rejections of nation-states in the period when national propagandas portrayed their own nations as righteous and almost sacred. This also partly explains why Mitrinovic became increasingly isolated from the Serbian and Yugoslav communities in London.

75 Jovan M. Jovanovitch, *Dnevnik 1896–1920* [Diary] (Belgrade: Prometej, 2015), entry of January 12, 1918, p. 405.

76 Ibid, entry of January 14, 1919, p. 580.

77 See Roland N. Stromberg, “The Intellectuals and the Coming of War in 1914”, *Journal of European Studies*, No. 3 (1973), 109–122. L. B. Steiman, “The Agony of Humanism in World War I: the case of Stefan Zweig”, *Journal of European Studies*, No. 6 (1976), 100–124.

78 Philip Mairet, *Autobiographical and other Papers* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1981), 92–93.

Promotion of Meštrović and art as the only public activity during the War

His most important tie with the Yugoslavs in the subsequent period was through his association with the Dalmatian and Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrović, who was a great supporter of the Yugoslav idea and did enormous services in propagating both Serbia and future Yugoslavia during WW1. Meštrović was one of the founders and leading members of the London-based Yugoslav Committee.

Mitrinović's articles on Meštrović published in the period 1910–1914 were well-remembered and held in high esteem even after the Great War.⁷⁹ He also planned to invite Meštrović, whom he considered to be among the leading spirits of the 20th century, to contribute to his *Yearbook*. Therefore, the arrival of Meštrović to London in the spring of 1915 was a great opportunity for Mitrinović. The decision to focus on promoting Meštrović's art seems to have been conscious and well-planned. He decided to select a very rare kind of activity that could combine his cosmopolitanism with the Yugoslav idea.

Mitrinović wrote an epilogue for the book *The Slav Nations* by Srgjan Tucić. The epilogue is entitled "Buried Treasures", and he explained what he meant by that term. "We speak of the Southern Slav poetry and of Ivan Meštrović, our Southern Slav Michelangelo, as 'buried treasures'".⁸⁰ For him "the appearance of the artist-prophet Ivan Meštrović, a Dalmatian Catholic, is the central event in Southern Slav history of art."⁸¹ Once the artist's Temple of Kossovo was made, it would be a great achievement for Southern Slavs, and they would be able to claim "to have contributed to the greatest possessions of human culture for all time."⁸²

In 1915 and 1916, the only activities in which he was visibly involved were related to the promotion of Ivan Meštrović, who became celebrity in Britain after his exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and, therefore, the artist needed no intermediaries between him and his British admirers. Philip Mairet met Mitrinović in the capacity of self-proclaimed curator of Meštrović's exhibition in London. He noticed that he had redefined the local aspiration and traditions present in Meštrović art as "symbols of a supra-national, 'pan human' idealism", and that he was

79 Veljko Petrović, "Mitrinović, Dimitrije", *Enciklopedija srpsko-hrvatsko slovenačka*, vol. 2 (Zagreb: Bibliografski zavod, 1927), 998

80 Dimitrije Mitrinović, "Epilogue. 'Buried Treasures'", in Srgjan pl. Tucić, *The Slav Nations*, tr. by Fanny S. Copeland (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915), 179.

81 Ibid, 183.

82 Ibid, 184.

able to magnify this epic “into a sort of paradigm of the faith and destiny of mankind”.⁸³ What Mairet witnessed was Mitrinović’s way to seemingly speak about a national topic but only in order to expose ‘pan-human’ and cosmopolitan ideas.

Mitrinović was also occasionally mentioned in the provincial British press when events connected with Meštrović were locally organised. On some of these occasions, he served as a kind of art expert. On October 5, 1915, a presentation of Meštrović’s art was organised at the University of Leeds. After that, Mitrinović addressed the audience in the great hall of the University. He “presented the fascinating spectacle of an art critic turned devotee.” The Vice-Chancellor of the University introduced Mitrinović and said that he possessed “a wonderful command of the English language.” The main part of his lecture was dedicated to the Temple of Kossovo: as he put it, “if anything was to be the base of spiritual union between the Southern Slav and the British people, the sublime work of Mestrovic ought to be that base.” The Temple possesses “both the human and the divine beauty; it was the embodiment of human glory and an immense, although human, peace.” For Mitrinović, the Temple was “a reconciliation of mankind with eternity.” But, at the end of his contribution, a journalist of the *Yorkshire Post* slightly ironically noticed that the lecturer left unexplained “what was the mystery that made Serbia and Mestrovic the same entity.”⁸⁴

Mitrinović basically took advantage of Meštrović to prophesise his own ideas since this artist had clear universalist pretensions expressed in his art. The formula was the following: Serbia and future Yugoslavia had a task that was expressed in Meštrović’s art. The essence of that art was shown in the model of the Kossovo Temple, which symbolised eternal peace and mankind. Thus, various nations were there only to be united into a kind of world federation. Various states were supposed to bring peace to mankind and certainly not to wage wars. That was the message that Mitrinović camouflaged in the midst of a world war!

Meštrović was present but could not address the audience as he didn’t speak English, and instead Prof. M. E. Sadler, Vice Chancellor of the University, read his “message of Serbia, and of all her race.”⁸⁵ Among those who were present at Mitrinović’s lecture in Leeds were Father Nikolai Velimirovich, Jovan Zhuyovich (Žujović), President of the Serbian Royal Academy, and journalist Milan Marjanović, a member of the Yugoslav Committee. Marjanović was another admirer of the project of the

83 Philip Mairet, *Autobiographical and Other Papers*, 85.

84 “Ivan Mestrovic in Leeds”, *The Yorkshire Post*, October 6. 1915. 4

85 *Ibid.*

Kosovo Temple, but Zhuyovich really disliked the idea of the Temple.⁸⁶ On their way back to London, they discussed the very unfavourable position of Serbia, and Mitrinovic burst into tears.⁸⁷

Although Zhuyovich was not particularly impressed by Mitrinovic's lecture, it did make an impression and was commented on in an article on Meštrović's art some four months later. The author focused on his claim that Serbia's mission, once it re-emerged, would be "that of reconciling the hostile peoples of making the synthesis of the nations as Mestrovic had made a synthesis of the grand styles in art."⁸⁸ When a monograph on Meštrović was published in 1919, Mitrinovic was not invited to contribute, but Ernest H. R. Collings, who had written extensively in the British press on Meštrović during the Great War, commented on Mitrinovic's lecture and assessed that he possessed "a deep understanding of his compatriot's ideas", and also "a stimulating knowledge of ancient and modern art." Collings thought that both the address and the lecture were "worthy of being published in their entirety."⁸⁹

Meštrović himself mentioned Mitrinovic only once in his memoirs. In his version, Sadler told him to invite several friends to Leeds, and he was joined by Zhuyovich, Velimirovich and Mitrinovic, and that is all he said about his relationship with Dimitri.⁹⁰ He was probably the best expert on Meštrović's art in the Isles, and at least one of his articles in German on Meštrović was available to British critics.⁹¹ His lecture in Leeds was not unfavourably received. Therefore, it is quite striking that he simply disappeared as the interpreter of Meštrović in Britain. Instead, new names emerged. In 1916, Yusuf Ali published a booklet on Meštrović, and, at the end of this work, he personally thanked Bogdan Popovich for having read the proofs, and Mitrinovic was not even mentioned as someone who was consulted.⁹²

86 Entry in Zhuyovich's Diary on Sep. 22 (Oct. 5), 1915. Jovan Zhuyovich, *Dnevnik [Diary]* (Belgrade: Archive of Serbia, 1988), vol. 2, 200.

87 Ibid, 201.

88 "Ivan Mestrovic. An Estimate of his Art. By the Belgian critic, Abel Torcy (Max Blicke)", *The Yorkshire Post*, January 28. 1916. 4

89 Ernest H. R. Collings, "Meštrović in England", in *Ivan Meštrović. A Monograph* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1919), 52. The handwritten text of Mitrinovic's lecture has been preserved and is entitled "The Temple of Serbia; or on the civilisation of Meštrović" UB SC NAF, 1 – 3 – 2.

90 Ivan Meštrović, *Uspomene na političke ljude i događaje* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1969), 56.

91 D. Mitrinovic, "Serbische Kunst auf der Internationalen Kunstausstellung in Rom", *Die Kunst für Alle* (November 1911).

92 A. Yusuf Ali, *Meštrović and Serbian Sculpture* (London: Elkin Methews, 1916).

From **The Times** of 1815.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 29. Price 7d.

In consequence of the peace, the *Enterprise* tender, off the Tower, is ordered to be paid off, and to be sold,

2 per Cent. Consols 61½ ± ¼

SERBIAN FOLK-MUSIC.

Lady St. Helier lent her drawing-room (52, Portland-place) yesterday afternoon for what may be described as an exposition of Serbian music by M. Dimitrije Mitrinovic. Just now, when English people are eager to catch at every hint which can enrich their sympathy with that Ally who is being most sorely tried and remains least known to them, the little concert or lecture (it was called both and was not exactly either) was most welcome.

M. Mitrinovic gave us a "Rokovet" (basket) of peasant songs from the Morava Valley; Mr. Hubert Bath had arranged it for voice and piano, and it was sung by Miss Marjorie Ayling. He explained how these songs are interpreted and what they mean, and showed incidentally that, sung by parties of men and girls, with accompaniment on the pipes, they have the elements of national drama. "Have you seen the heroes of Morava?" sing the men; the girls have not. "Then we go to the wars and when we return you will see them," is the reply. Three national dances arranged in modern style for viola and piano by the Serbian composer, Miloye Miloyevich, were played by Mr. Eric Coates and Mr. Bath.

M. Mitrinovic dwelt on the development of the distinctively Serbian type of melody out of the more primitive Balkan Slavonic types, and particularly emphasized the pure and aspiring nature of his country's music.

Article "Serbian Folk Music"; The Times, 29.11.1915, p. 5 b

I was able to find only one reference to Mitrinovic in *The Times*. In the article "Serbian Folk-Music", his lecture on Serbian peasant songs, privately held in the drawing room of Lady St Helier in November 1915, was favourably covered.⁹³ Even that single mention during the Great War in a leading London daily was about art.

The first circle of his associates

During the Great War, the general mood in Britain was quite often close to utter despair and a sense of futility. The war produced the so-called "lost generation." Meaningless casualties of the war created a sense

⁹³ "Serbian Folk-Music", *The Times*, Nov. 29, 1915, 5.

that humanity was abandoned and that it had no purpose. The disproportionately high death toll among Brits with university degrees made this group particularly prone to existential anxiety. To understand the level of disillusionment, one should mention that one quarter of Oxbridge students under the age of 25 who had served in the British army in 1914 lost their lives.⁹⁴ Why God would permit such horrors was the usual line of thinking, at least for those who still contemplated the messages of divine providence. That kind of background allowed Mitrinovic to gradually find his devotees, followers and associates during and just after the Great War in Britain. He was a man who dared to ask a very tormenting question: “What is humanity’s purpose?” Moreover, he even believed that he had found the answer.

It is important to note that his first London circle was formed in the period when he had to keep the lowest profile ever. His first two associates were the Serbian theologian Father Nikolai Velimirovich (1881–1956), and the British writer Stephen Graham (1884–1975). The way how Mitrinovic envisaged his school gradually developed, but from the very beginning he was convinced that he had to start by pairing himself with another person to which a third one would be added and the group would then gradually grow. With every new disciple, he would make something that he called PA, which stood for personal alliance. From his correspondence with Gutkind from the late 1920s, it seems quite possible that he made such an alliance with Eric Gutkind in the spring of 1914.⁹⁵

Philip Mairet describes how he made his PA with Mitrinovic in early 1917. He was told that Vladimir Solovyov had already written everything they had to do. To achieve what Solovyov had explained, one had to go back and find his own self, his own “I” as “a living centre of the universe”. One should not do it alone in order to avoid becoming “mad as Nietzsche”. Only occasionally one may “attain something of this remembrance, this Divine *anamnesis*, together with one other person. A you and I may become a we – spiritually. And these two persons could become three: then they could incorporate others, indefinitely.”⁹⁶

It is not clear who the first person in London with whom he made this “Divine *anamnesis*” was: Graham, or Father Nikolai, although Graham hinted that it could have been the latter.⁹⁷ At that time, Father Nikolai Ve-

94 Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes* (London: Abacus Book, 1995), 26.

95 See Slobodan G. Markovich, “Dilemmas of Interpretation”, *Književna istorija*, Vol. 52, No. 171 (2020), 245–248. See also NAF 1/7/1.

96 Philip Mairet, *Autobiographical and other Papers* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1981), 103–104.

97 “He addressed himself particularly to me; it seems father Nikolai already knew what he would say.” Stephen Graham, *Part of the Wonderful Scene. An Autobiography*, 121.

Velimirovich was a liberal Serbian theologian with a double doctoral degree (in theology and in philosophy) from the University in Bern. He was already in a serious dispute with the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Serbia, Metropolitan Dimitrije, before World War One, and, in 1913, he declined an offer to become the bishop of Nish. He was in Britain in 1908/09, when he learned English and became fascinated by Anglican and Catholic modernist theology. At the same time, Father Nikolai was very popular with King Peter of Serbia and had many supporters in secular circles in Belgrade. The Prime Minister of Serbia Pashich had a very high opinion of him, and, in May 1915, he decided to send him to the United States via Britain to promote the Yugoslav idea there, and also to encourage co-operation between American Yugoslavs of Orthodox and Catholic faiths. In June-August 1915, he did this quite successfully and, on September 13, he returned to Britain. Soon, a new offensive of the Central Powers against Serbia began, and he had no choice but to stay in Britain till the end of the war.

In September/October 1915, Mitrinovic and Velimirovich must have been in contact through the Yugoslav Committee and various networks of Serbian emigrants. Canon Carnegie, a high Anglican churchman, gathered London Serbs around him, and organised informal suppers for them. At one such meeting, Graham met Father Nikolai and Mitrinovic for the first time. He recalled that the latter “was always expounding Solovyof and the future of Christendom.”⁹⁸

Velimirovich was also influential in the Serbian Legation and belonged to the so-called Tuesday group, which met at the Legation every Tuesday since January 1916. It consisted of the Serbian minister in London, Belgrade professors and brothers Pavle and Bogdan Popovich, ethnographer Tihomir Djordjevich, and occasionally other Serbian and Yugoslav emigrants as well.⁹⁹ He was also Mitrinovic’s main link with Serbian official circles, and it is clear that Velimirovich was quite often ready to recommend him to various persons who had political influence.

Stephen Graham (1884–1975) was a British writer with very profound knowledge and experience of Russian religious and social life. He wandered through Russia, was fascinated with this country, especially with its religious life, as he understood it, and published a series of books on Russia in the period 1910–1914. Since there were almost no experts in

98 Stephen Graham, “Nikolai Velimirovic in London”, FSU [Florida State University], MSS, No, 581, f. 23 a.

99 For more details see Slobodan G. Markovich, “Activities of father Nikolai Velimirovich in Great Britain during the Great War”, *Balkanica*, No. 48 (2017), 143–190.

Britain with first-hand knowledge of Russia, he served as an intermediary between the two cultures until the February Revolution in 1917, and even Prime Minister Lloyd George consulted him occasionally. However, his enchantment with “the Holy Russia” made him increasingly unpopular in mainstream diplomatic and political British circles in 1916 and 1917, and this undermined his reputation as an expert on Russia. Political moderates and liberals in Russia were also very dissatisfied with his emphasis on Russian religious life and his fascination with official Russia, and this made him politically unacceptable to the bourgeois government of 1917, and even more so to the Bolsheviks.¹⁰⁰ His Anglo-Catholicism, the stream within the Church of England that tended to see the Orthodox churches as the closest spirits with their own church, easily made him and Velimirovich good friends.

Father Nikolai was in Russia from January 1910 to May 1911. He was sent there by the metropolitan of Serbia because he was considered “too Protestant in spirit” for an Orthodox theologian. This means that he, like Graham, had direct knowledge of Russia, and from 1909, he was an open proponent of the church union between the Orthodox churches and the Church of England.¹⁰¹ Therefore, he and Stephen Graham became very close and, in March and April 1916, they delivered five lectures at St Margaret’s Church, Westminster, a church of special significance because it was attended by the members of the Parliament. Father Nikolai’s sermons made a strong impression and were even printed in *The Church Times*.¹⁰² He became a well-known preacher and celebrity in Britain, and various churches and foundations competed to have him give addresses and sermons.

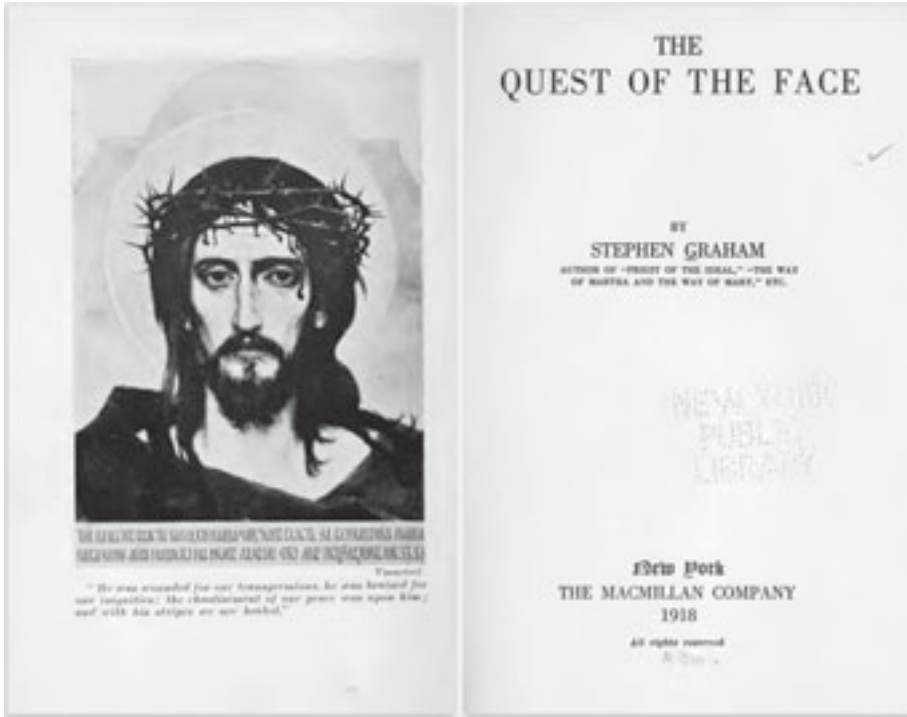
Everything we know about this first circle comes from Graham’s writings and recollections. He wrote during the war a religious prose text entitled *In the Quest of the Face*, in which the main character is called Dushan. Later he revealed that Dushan was actually Dimitri.¹⁰³ In 1931, Graham published a documentary novel on the Sarajevo Assassination titled *St. Vitus Day*, for which he interviewed some of the conspirators, and he discussed that with Mitrinovic as well. Finally, in 1964, Graham published

100 Michael Hughes, *Beyond Holy Russia. The Life and Times of Stephen Graham* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2014), 122–126.

101 Nikola Velimirovitch D.D., “Problems of Reunion with the East”, *Guardian*, No. 3300, 3 March 1909, 340–341.

102 Rev. father Nicolai Velimirovic, *The Religious Spirit of the Slavs. Three lectures given in Lent, 1916. Sermons on subjects suggested by the war*. Third series. St. Margaret’s Westminster (London: Macmillan and Co., 1916), 40 p.

103 Stephen Graham, *Part of the Wonderful Scene*, p. 102.



Title page of *The Quest of the Face* (1918) by Stephen Graham

his autobiography.¹⁰⁴ These three works offer us excellent glimpses into the inner world of Mitrinovic just before and during the Great War.

The members of the first London circle were supposed to be “secretly committed” to giving their lives “to the realization of the Kingdom of Heaven upon Earth”. In Graham’s own words, he himself agreed to form with Mitrinovic something he called “a personal alliance.”¹⁰⁵ The idea of the circle of followers was to have a strong nucleus that would grow in time, but, even with Graham’s active assistance, Mitrinovic was not able to find new disciples.¹⁰⁶ The nucleus of this “secret society” was formed in the last weeks of 1915,¹⁰⁷ but it was never expanded and only a troika consisting of Dimitri, Graham and Father Nikolai remained.

104 Stephen Graham, *The Quest of the Face* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1918); Stephen Graham, *St. Vitus Day* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1931); Stephen Graham, *Part of the Wonderful Scene. An Autobiography* (London: Collins, 1964).

105 Stephen Graham, *Part of the Wonderful Scene*, p. 121.

106 *Ibid.*, 122–23.

107 Michael Hughes, *Beyond Holy Russia*, 118.

From Graham's references one can infer what the aims of the first trio made by Mitrinovic were:

- Young Christendom should be made as a secret society.
- It should be developed from the initiated few (a Christian conscious nucleus) to the many yet unaware of the movement.
- This “crusade” was not to be advertised from a broad platform. “All in secret, all below ground.” It had to be secret “till we are ready to break surface and grow to be a mighty tree.”¹⁰⁸
- Mitrinovic's message or doctrine must not be watered down.¹⁰⁹

The Quest of the Face was written in 1917, after the February Revolution in Russia,¹¹⁰ and was published in 1918. In the preface to this book, Graham wrote that it was “a record of actual life”, and he expressed his hopes that for the readers of the book it could become “an invitation to become builders of the City in which Dushan and I have been active spiritual masons.”¹¹¹

Dushan, Graham explained in the book, was a Southern Slav who “ceased to be a Serb, because Serbia is not any more and cannot be again what it was”. Instead, he became a European, pleading that all should obtain, in addition to their nationality, “the higher consciousness of being European.”¹¹² He is described as “a sort of mystical friction which, added to any other friction, always makes up unity.”¹¹³ He also let Dushan explain in the book what his society was about. It was essentially about consciousness. The Kingdom of Heaven, which is latently present, should be developed. Associates must be found so that “a sacred fellowship” may be realised in them.¹¹⁴ In search of them, he and Dushan would be wandering among magistrates, preachers, and teachers to find those who are “clearly ‘for’ and have the new faith.”¹¹⁵ “New Europe” will be a sort of Montessori school “where the nations are the children”. It was to be an inclusive search in which the colour bar was to be erased. “White man must love and understand black man, yellow man.”¹¹⁶

108 Stephen Graham, *Part of the Wonderful Scene*, 121.

109 Ibid.

110 Michael Hughes, *Beyond Holy Russia*, 128.

111 Stephen Graham, “Prefatory Note”, in Idem, *The Quest of the Face* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1918).

112 Stephen Graham, *In the Quest of the Face*, 75.

113 Ibid, 76.

114 Ibid, 94.

115 Ibid, 117.

116 Ibid, 118–119.

Dushan/Dimitri preached a kind of introspective Christianity in which Jesus Christ “was the ideal side of our personality”, and his Christianity was all-inclusive: “Whenever you understand a fellow-man you redeem him. And you cannot understand him fully without understanding all.”¹¹⁷ The book also reveals plans that this new Christianity should be spread to the East:

India, China, Japan, all must be brought in, and would be brought in if the best Christians went to them... I know Buddhism, Confucianism, Brahminism, — these philosophies are deep and true... the churches could be brought to Christ, those outside the churches and all the East. Then united humanity would be at hand.¹¹⁸

The most confusing part about the first circle is the relations between Velimirovich and Mitrinovic. The circle should have been active already at the end of 1915. Mairet, who joined the second circle early in 1917, was sent by Mitrinovic to speak with Father Nikolai. This happened after his famous sermon entitled “The Sacrifices of Nations”, which he delivered at St. Paul’s Cathedral on July 23, 1917.¹¹⁹ He learned that Father Nikolai was “on very friendly, perhaps intimate terms” with Dimitri, but he also discovered “that there was a bone of contention between them.” Mairet claimed that Velimirovich agreed with their aims “in principle on almost every point, but he would not take the decisive step of personal collaboration with us.”¹²⁰ Mairet was sent to bring him to the circle. Father Nikolai was ready to meet at any point “but he left me in no doubt that, in his view, the reasons which imposed certain limits upon his cooperation were – for no fault of mine, of course – beyond my present comprehension.”¹²¹

In March 1918, Velimirovich became a regular contributor of *The New Age*, the journal edited by Alfred Orage. In the period between March and September, he published ten contributions for *The New Age* under the pseudonym Vran Gavran.¹²² Wallace Martin wrongly identified

117 Ibid, 126–128.

118 Ibid, 89–90.

119 The sermon was fully published by *The Church Times*: Father Nicholas Velimirovich, D. D., “The Sacrifices of Nations. A sermon preached at St. Paul’s Cathedral, on the seventh Sunday after Trinity”, *Church Times*, 27 July 1917, p. 73.

120 Mairet, Autobiographical, 113.

121 Ibid, 114.

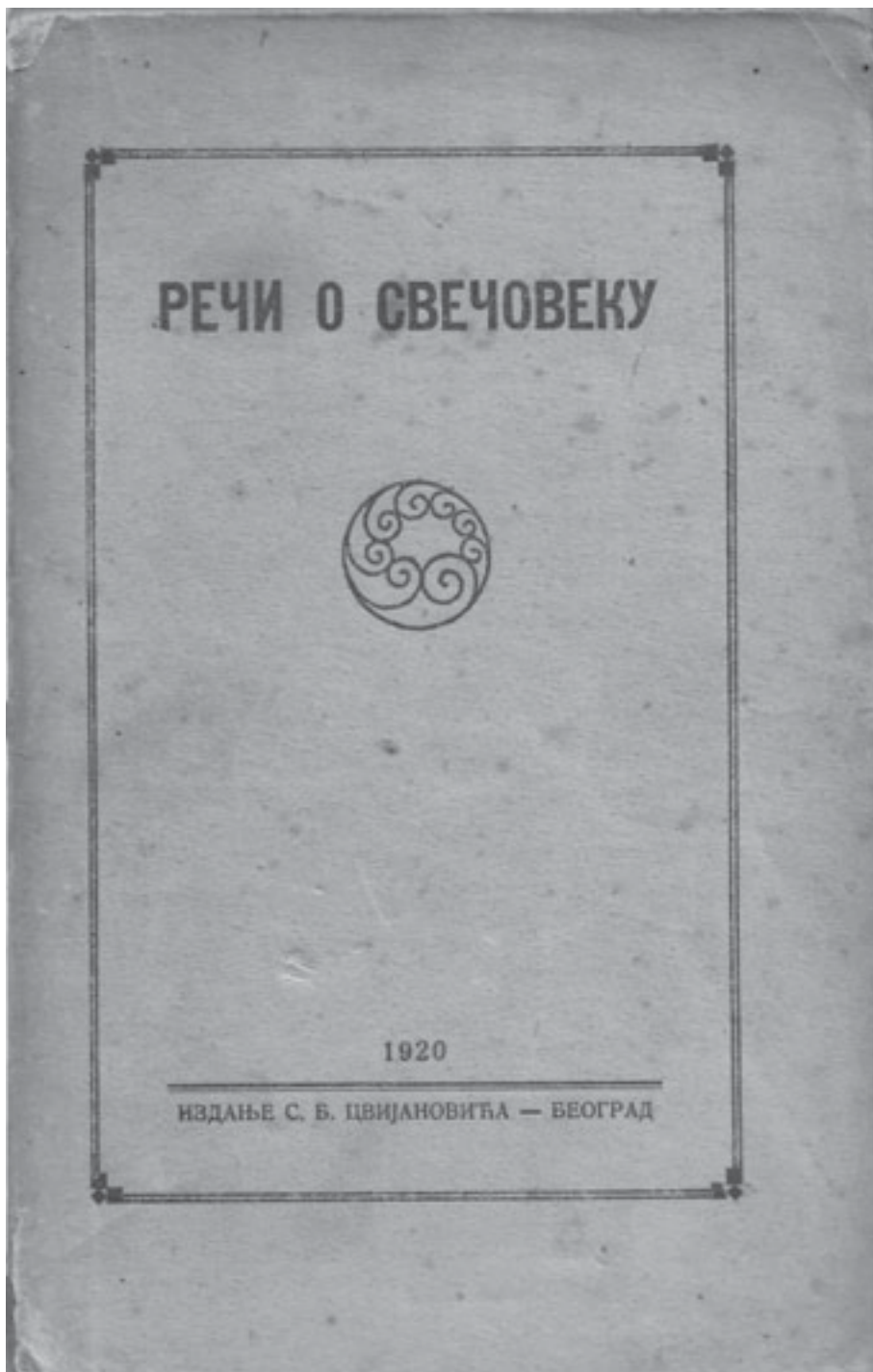
122 R. A. Vran-Gavran, “Ideals and Methods I”, No. 1333, Vol. 22 (March 28, 1918), 433; “Ideals and Methods II”, No. 1334, Vol. 22 (April 4, 1918), 455; “Modernism and Antiquism”, No. 1336, Vol. 22 (April 18, 1918), 487; “Jesus the Carpenter”, No. 1338, Vol. 23 (May 02, 1918), 11–12; “Communism of the Saints”, No. 1342, Vol. 23 (May 30, 1918), 71–72; “London Songs”, No. 1346,

Vran Gavran as “a Russian monk”,¹²³ but as early as 1976 James Webb correctly attributed this pseudonym to Father Nikolai.¹²⁴ It is characteristic that the ideas expressed by Graham in *The Quest of the Face* and by Father Nikolai/Vran Gavran in *The New Age* are strikingly similar.

It seems that the first circle of the three friends did not work that well, and that by mid-1917, it disintegrated. The same conclusion may be made on the basis of the novel *The Quest of the Face* because the “spiritual masons” of the Christlike City were only Graham and Dushan/Dimitri. Father Nikolai is mentioned once when Dushan enumerates “an endless diverse humanity glory to God for ever and ever” and includes in that list pairs of different personages like “a Diogenes, and an Edison”, or “Henry VIII and Henry VI”, but also “St. Sava and Father Nicholas, and the Archbishop of Canterbury and St. Francis of Assisi.”¹²⁵ In that way, Father Nikolai was given a very high spiritual rank, being paired with St. Francis of Assisi. However, he is not mentioned as a member of the circle of builders, in this group, and therefore one may conclude that he certainly left the group before July 1917. One can only speculate when exactly his distancing from the group took place. The emergence of the second group of Mitrinovic’s associates, in early 1917, could be an indication that the first group had already disintegrated during the course of 1916.

However, one finds clear influence of Mitrinovic in the texts that Vran Gavran/Father Nikolai wrote for *The New Age*. Finally, in early 1920, Father Nikolai published in Belgrade his book *Reči o svečoveku (Discourses on Panhuman)*. The book was published unsigned. It describes Ananda Vran Gavran, who travels around the world on a spiritual quest. The book repeats some of the ideas that Graham attributed to Dushan in his book. In 1983, Predrag Palavestra remarked that Mitrinovic may have influenced Velimirovich’s poetic vision of the Panhuman.¹²⁶ He was, however, ambiguous in his analysis of Mitrinovic’s influence, and, in his well-known book on Mitrinovic, Palavestra discussed the possibility that suggestibility of Mitrinovic’s visionary view may have influenced Father Nikolai.

- Vol. 23 (June 27, 1918), 138–139; “London Songs III and IV”, No. 1348, Vol. 23 (July 11, 1918), 171–172; “London Songs V and VI”, No. 1352, Vol. 23 (Aug. 08, 1918), 237–238; “London Songs VII, VIII and IX”, No. 1354, Vol. 23 (Aug. 22, 1918), 269–271; “London Songs X”, No. 1358, Vol. 23 (Sep. 19, 1918), 333.
- 123 Wallace Martin, *The New Age under Orage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967), 284.
- 124 James Webb, *The Occult Establishment* (La Salle, ILL: Open Court Publishing Company, 1976), 191–192.
- 125 Stephen Graham, *In the Quest of the Face*, 87.
- 126 Predrag Palavestra, “Preobražaj realističkog nasledja“, in *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. VI-2 (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1983), 388.



*Cover page of the anonymously published Discourses on the Panhuman (1920)
by Nikolai Velimirovich*

At the same time, he also expressed doubts that “an eclectic thinker” like Mitirnovic “may have shaken and transformed the learned theologian and subsequent bishop.”¹²⁷ The whole issue remains open. It is clear that it was not one-way influence but rather a bilateral transfer, in which Mitrinovic’s inclination to the transcendental was encouraged by Father Nikolai, and, in 1916–1918, turned into a religious internal quest as well.

One could, therefore, conclude that the result of this first circle were two books inspired by Mitrinovic: *In the Quest of a Face* published by Graham in 1918, and *Discourses on Panhuman* written by Velimirovich in 1918–19, and published in Belgrade at the very beginning of 1920. Since its first publication, the book on panhuman has remained one of the most popular publications of religious prose in Serbian.

The second circle in London

His second circle was formed in early 1917. Just around the New Year, he had a meeting with Philip Mairet, who described himself as someone who followed Mitrinovic, or, as he formulated it, “his esoteric circle”. He met him for the first time at the Meštrović exhibition held at the Victoria and Albert Museum, which opened in June 1915.¹²⁸ Mairet was very impressed by the knowledge of art and eloquence that Mitrinovic displayed on that occasion, or as he put it: “for I felt almost as if I were listening to some messenger from a higher realm of knowledge about the predicament of mankind.”¹²⁹ In Mairet’s imagination, his new acquaintance already had “the aura of a sage or prophet”, and he himself soon became “an aspirant in search of a teacher.”¹³⁰

At the time when he joined Mitrinovic as his disciple, Mairet was an artist who had special interest in occult things and mysticism. Mitrinovic invited him to his apartment in Museum Street, and one conversation was enough to attract Mairet to his cause. He told him that the purpose of philosophy was “to learn to know the total truth of what we are and what we want to become.” The aim of this insight would be to make men and the world better, and for that one had to change oneself to become a different being. Each individual is “a centre of universal consciousness – which is Divine.”¹³¹ Since reaching this elevated state of mind was sup-

127 Predrag Palavestra, *Dogma i utopija Dimitrija Mitrinovića* (Belgrade: Zabod za udžbenike, 2003, 2nd enl. ed. [1st ed.: 1977]), 310.

128 Philip Mairet, “Reintroduction”, in Idem, *A. R. Orage. A Memoir* (New York: University Books, 1966), p. x.

129 Philip Mairet, *Autobiographical and other Papers*, 85.

130 Ibid, 86.

131 Philip Mairet, *Autobiographical and other Papers*, 105–106.

London
Ditchling.
Sun 28.

Teleph. ~~number~~ Gorpola

Dr. James Young rang up to say that he is starting off tomorrow morning for Vienna and Zurich. He is going to see Dr. Adler; and stay at Caffee Schuller.

If you would like to send a message to Dr. Adler, he (Dr. Young) will be in communication with either Selian tonight or tomorrow morning early

Philip Mairet

I last I have
very we hoped to
unity of interests.
not to lead in a
it - may be co
will be better, of
not after we ha
the goal.

Letter of Philip Mairet to D. Mitrinovic, NAF 1/7/2.

posed to happen with three persons, and then be further enlarged, he soon added the third member of the group. It was Helen Soden, a lady in her forties, married to a medical doctor. After several joint sessions, Mairet was totally enthusiastic:

I clearly remember thinking as I looked at him, that when the first Christian neophytes heard the great preachers – St. Paul or St. Augustine for instance – proclaiming the Gospel that was to make all things new, it must sometimes have been just like this.¹³²

Philip Mairet claimed that, at the time when he joined Mitrinovic (in 1917), his “circle of devotees” was made “of only a very small nucleus of persons of no public note.”¹³³ From the very beginning, not all of his followers understood what he was preaching. Some seemed simply to have sensed that he was offering a great message. Helen Soden was one such case, and the same pattern was to be regularly repeated later. He was willing to condense some of his teachings into one or two pages, and such communications prepared for Helen Soden have survived. A text has

¹³² Ibid, 108.

¹³³ P. Mairet, “Reintroduction”, xi.

been preserved in an envelope addressed to her on September 6, 1918, and I will quote here just several introductory lines as an illustration:

To realise Reality is not easy, to know God is not painless, to commune with Brahman is not simple; yet is infinitely less complicate[d], ecstatic and terribly superhuman than humanity generally thinks. The great and almost insuperable difficulty of becoming one with the infinite lies in the simplicity, immediateness, in determinateness of the real Reality of humanity itself...¹³⁴

Mairet was a very disciplined follower of Mitrinovic and, in his own words, he was a believer who had chosen “the way of faith and obedience.” He also described the content of the training as psycho-spiritual knowledge, which consisted of “exercises of the interior life for which, however, he referred us to the writings of a number of authorities ancient and modern.”¹³⁵ He insisted that the training had to progress up to the point when his followers/disciples would become “changed beings.”

However, in Mairet’s case, the circumstances permitted his first period of intensive training to last no more than several weeks. Mairet then joined Douglas Pepler, a Quaker. He worked at his farm in the village of Ditchling in Sussex to avoid conscription, and lived that kind of life for a year and half throughout 1917 and the first half of 1918.¹³⁶ Mairet used all his free time to study the doctrine of “panhumanity” suggested by Dimitri.¹³⁷ Finally, he was arrested by military authorities for avoiding conscription. Since he refused to obey orders, he was imprisoned and was released at the end of April 1919.

By that time, Helen Soden had bought a cottage in Ditchling and, in the subsequent years, it became one of Mitrinovic’s favourite places. He continued to train Mairet and Helen Soden in Ditchling during his frequent yet short visits. It was at this point that Mitrinovic, in Mairet’s words, finally resigned from the Serbian Legation. This is what his later followers also believed.¹³⁸ However, the preserved sources do not confirm that he really was engaged by the Serbian Legation, so it could be understood more as his break with official Serbian/Yugoslav circles since there was no official position that he could have resigned from. It is, however, quite possible that Father Nikolai helped Dimitri to get some minor engagements, or that he himself engaged him occasionally to finish some of the jobs that he dealt with.

134 UB NAF, 1/7/5.

135 Philip Mairet, *Autobiographical and other Papers*, 112.

136 *Ibid*, 113, 120.

137 *Ibid*, 122, 126–27.

138 *Ibid*, 129. In the chronology of DM’s life prepared by NAF, one finds under 1919: “DM still employed by the Serbian Legation but becoming increasingly dissatisfied with his work.” Chronology of DM’s life, NAF, 1/1/6, p. 5.

The creation of a new state, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, on December 1, 1918, which he had so passionately advocated, raised the question of whether he would move to that state, something that almost all other Serbian war-time émigrés in London were to do. The semi-official chronology of his life by the New Atlantis Foundation mentions interventions made in his favour in Belgrade in January 1920. Yet, nothing came out of them, and no surviving records suggest that he was ever offered any position by the new state. His reputation in Belgrade was very different in 1914, when he had originally come to Britain, and in 1919 when the war was over. At the beginning of the war, he was considered as a very important publicist and national worker who could significantly help the propaganda of Serbia and the future Yugoslav state. By the end of the war, he was in less than friendly relations with many Serbian emigrants and officials, and was increasingly seen as a person with an affinity for esoteric and similar ideas that seemed as pure fantasies to the rather pragmatic mainstream of the Serbian political emigration. Apart from Father Nikolai, who became the bishop of Zhicha (Žiča) in 1919, he had no other friends who could advocate his case in the new state.

He was also dissatisfied with his activities in Britain. His plan was certainly not to gather “persons of no public note.” Since his Munich period, he had been engaged in activities aimed at global cultural and spiritual transformation and reform. Mairet claimed that Mitrinovic encountered “the lack of interest in the idea of a new era after the war by the English leaders of thought.”¹³⁹ Even Philip Mairet, Mitrinovic’s most faithful disciple, was shaken, at some point in the second half of 1919, in his belief in his spiritual master. He committed himself fully to Mitrinovic’s training and even began learning Sanskrit. It was in that period that Dimitri attracted a mystically oriented writer from New Zealand with a glass eye who joined the circle, but soon came to believe that his teacher “was of the nature of a black magician – a man who had indeed ‘angelic knowledge’ but was using it for evil purposes.” This man influenced Mairet to temporarily break with Mitrinovic.

In June 1919, Dimitri met Valerie Cooper, who owned a dance studio, and during the break with Mairet he formed another group at her flat in Fitzroy Street.¹⁴⁰ One meeting with Valerie Cooper was enough to make her fully fascinated. He made an impression on her as a “human baby as well as angel.”¹⁴¹ His association with Valerie Copper finally allowed Mitrinovic to come into contact with the London circles that had

139 Chronology of DM’s life, NAF, 1/1/6, p. 6.

140 Chronology of DM’s life, NAF, 1/1/6, p. 5. Philip Mairet, *Autobiographical*, 130.

141 “From the Note Book of Valerie Cooper”, NAF, 1/1/6.

some social influence and, from that moment in June 1919, he could finally start to create his “school of initiation”, as Mairet called it.¹⁴²

It seems that, since his student days, Mitrinovic had relied on women who found him very delightful and enjoyed his presence. Helen Soden and Valerie Cooper were both fascinated by his charm. Mairet noticed that women considered Mitrinovic very attractive but that he was also “embarrassingly attractive to homosexual men”, and “to the homosexual side of women too.” Mairet discussed his own potential unconscious attraction to Mitrinovic and, even some 40 years after his termination of relations with him, he still had internal struggles about that, and found consolation in the fact that divinity was androgynous,¹⁴³ or, in other words, God was bisexual, so his creatures would logically be of the same nature. It is quite clear that Mitrinovic used his charm to attract some of his followers and also to keep them as his disciples.

What Dimitri said to Valerie Cooper, during their first meetings in June 1919, reveals clear continuity with his plans from Munich, except

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142 Philip Mairet, *Autobiographical*, 131.

143 “More about Mitrinovic”, undated letter of Mairet to Neil Montgomery from 1972, in Philip Mairet, *Autobiographical*, 141.

that his idea to reform the world now took into consideration the experience of the Great War. “Everything was too wrong in the world” and therefore there was no use attempting to reform anything: “What should happen is that a body of thought should arise between the artists, priests and scientists, which could in time, take its place beside the world-power. And then as this body of thought grew stronger, it could reach over the seas and join with similar bodies in other countries.”¹⁴⁴ Valerie Cooper later became aware that Dimitri described to her his “Senate conception”.¹⁴⁵

Mitrinovic, Philippe Mairet and A. Orage

The first encounter of Mitrinovic with *The New Age* was not a fortunate one. On January 28, 1915, Paul Selver, a specialist in Czech and Slovak literature, wrote a review in the journal entitled “Partial Truth about Slavs”. In his review, Selver criticised Srgjan Tucić’s handbook entitled *Slav Nations* for some factual mistakes, but also for his overemphasis on South Slavs in the book. He paid special attention to the epilogue of the book written by Mitrinovic, who had, in his opinion, missed an opportunity “to find recognition for the best Slav writers of recent years”, and he called this failure “a signal neglect of duty”. In Selver’s final assessment, the book was a “credit to nobody.”¹⁴⁶ Mitrinovic was quick to meet Selver. In their personal encounter, his hypnotic eyes were very convincing, or in Selver’s own words: “Hardly had I shaken hands with Mitrinovic than I found myself so affected by his mere presence that I nearly lost consciousness.”¹⁴⁷ He accepted Selver’s criticism but added that everything had been done in a hurry.

Selver explained in his book on *The New Age* that he introduced Mitrinovic to Orage without specifying the exact date. Associates of the New Atlantis Foundation prepared the chronology of Mitrinovic’s life during the Great War and placed this first meeting with Orage in 1915.¹⁴⁸ Selver was a common-sense person and quite distant from Orage and his “interest in abstract thought and philosophical speculation”, and also from “his familiarity with occult and transcendental matters.”¹⁴⁹

144 “From the Note Book of Valerie Cooper”, NAF, 1/1/6, p. 2.

145 About his Senate project see Andrew Rigby, “Training for Cosmopolitan Citizenship in the 1930s: The Project of Dimitrije Mitrinovic”, *Peace and Change*, vol. 24, No. 3 (July 1999), 387–389.

146 Paul Selver, “Partial Truth about the Slavs”, *The New Age*, Vol. 16, No. 13 (Jan. 28, 1915), 350–351.

147 Paul Selver, *Orage and The New Age Circle*, 57.

148 UB SC NAF, 1–1–6.

149 Paul Selver, *Orage and The New Age Circle*, 59.

As already mentioned, the first person from Mitrinovic's original circle whose articles appeared in *The New Age* was Father Nikolai. In March 1918, he began writing under the pseudonym R. A. Vran-Gavran. It is not clear who introduced whom to Orage. Wallace Martin claimed that it was Janko Lavrin who introduced R. A. Vran-Gavran to Orage, but his book is not reliable in other details that can be checked. Mairet wrote his first article for *The New Age* in December 1919, when he published his first contribution entitled "Spiritual Knowledge".¹⁵⁰

At the time when Mitrinovic began his intensive training of Mairet in 1917, he had already known Orage for two years or so. He tried to exert influence on Orage, but apparently had little success. Mairet described these efforts: "To them, as to us converts, he preached the same doctrine, and we felt their sympathy, spoke with the same force and brilliance, urging him to join him in the creation of benign 'open conspiracy' for the salvation of the world in the name of 'Panhumanity'".¹⁵¹

Mairet claims that Mitrinovic had a plan just after the Great War. It was "to create a movement in England, a centre of the panhuman idealism which – as I gathered from him – he had discussed in Germany with Erich Gutkind and a Dutch idealist named Van Eeden."¹⁵² Yet, the movement had only several devotees in 1919. He was unsure how to proceed, and Mairet claimed that, when confronted with key life challenges, Mitrinovic would go to bed "with something like a mysterious illness."¹⁵³ Stephen Graham also mentions that Mitrinovic was so melancholic that he and his wife took him to their cottage in Ditchling because they feared he would commit suicide.¹⁵⁴

It is characteristic that Mitrinovic did not mix his distinguished listeners like Orage with his devotees. Mairet was only able to hear now and then that Dimitri was not satisfied with his efforts to attract Orage, but he was obviously very focused on that in 1919–20. In the circle of Orage and *The New Age*, in the aftermath of the Great War, the issues of social reform, new orientations in psychology and esoteric teachings were widely discussed. This was something that very much resembled the issues that Mitrinovic had discussed in Munich in 1914. Since he was well acquainted with all such topics, he became a frequent collocutor and his influence on Orage gradually turned this influential editor almost into his follower.

150 P. A. Mairet, "Spiritual Knowledge", *The New Age*, No. 7, Vol. 26 (Dec. 18, 1919), 110–111.

151 Philip Mairet, Reintroduction, xi.

152 Philip Mairet, *Autobiographical*, 128.

153 Ibid, 129.

154 Stephen Graham, *Part of the Wonderful Scene*, 251.

Mairet believed that Orage had spent “many interminable days and nights of conversation” with Dimitri before he invited him to join *The New Age* with regular weekly contributions under the pseudonym “M. M. Cosmoi”. The first issue of “World Affairs” was published on August 19, 1920.¹⁵⁵ Till October 13, 1921, there were 61 articles published with this title and under this pseudonym. Although the wider public had no idea who “M. M. Cosmoi” was, in the circles of *The New Age*, Mitrinovic became a well-known figure, and from 1921 and later he was involved in a series of public activities, of which the first one was the Adler Society (1927–1932).

His early London period (1914–1919) was a transitory period in which he had to adapt his Munich agenda and ambitious plans to the new circumstances that he confronted in England. His association with the sculptor Ivan Meštrović and the popular preacher Father Nikolai, at the time when both became celebrities in Britain, showed him that people from his native region could become well-known and even respected persons in Britain. Unlike Mitrinovic, whose father was a teacher, Meštrović and Father Nikolai were of peasant origin. Their meteoric rise signalled to Mitrinovic that everything was possible in Britain, and that it could be a real land of opportunity for him.

Yet, the period of the Great War was very unfavourable for these plans and actions. His pacifism and cosmopolitanism were far from desirable in Britain of that age. In spite of that, he was able to form his two first circles of followers in London: in 1915–16, with Father Nikolai and Stephen Graham, and, in 1917–19, with Philip Mairet and Helen Soden. His association with Father Nikolai and Stephen Graham enabled him to meet influential persons in Britain, but his ideas were rather out of touch with the realities and preferences of war-time Britain. Thus, he entered various groups of intellectuals, including those around *The New Age* journal, but without any possibility of influencing them. That he was able to form two small groups of disciples even during the war is just one of many testimonies of the power of his magnetic personality.

As soon as the Great War was over, he could act more openly to achieve his objectives, and to try to reach the more influential segments of British public opinion. He did that through the studio of Valerie Cooper, where he was able to meet members of Bloomsbury elites, and even more through *The New Age* journal. From about 1920 onward, he finally settled in London and decided to concentrate all his utopian efforts to reform mankind by making various networks of his devotes, followers and associates in the three decades that followed.

155 M. M. Cosmoi, “World Affairs”, *The New Age*, No. 16, Vol. 27 (Aug. 19, 1920), 243–244.

Abbreviations:

SDDM – *Sabrana djela Dimitrija Mitrovića* [Collected Works of Dimitrije Mitrović], edited by Predrag Palavestra (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1991), in three volumes.

Press and Periodicals in Britain (years consulted are in parentheses):

The New Age [1918–1920]
Misao [Sep. 1918 – April 1919]
The Times, London [1915]
The Southern Slav Bulletin [Oct. 1915 – Jan. 1919]
The Yorskihire Post [1915–16]

Unpublished sources:

AS, KSPL (Archives of Serbia, Belgrade, Royal Serbian Legation in London)
Documents of the legation for the period 1914–1919
SPA (Srpska potporna akcija – Serbian Relief Action)
FSU (Florida State University), MSS, No. 581, f. 23 a
Stephen Graham, “Nikolai Velimirovic in London”
UB SC NAF (University of Bradford, Special Collections, New Atlantis Foundation)
The New Atlantis Foundation. Dimitrije Mitrović Archive
ULSM SC (University Library Svetozar Marković, Belgrade, Special Collections)
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