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PROFESSOR ĐORĐE TASIĆ AS AN ANTI-FASCIST²

ABSTRACT: The founder of the Society for Sociology and Social Sciences – the predecessor of the Serbian Sociological Association – and the journal *Sociološki pregled / Sociological Review* – Professor Đorđe Tasić (Vranje, 1892 – Belgrade, 1943) is known to have been a leftist by his convictions and a member of the left-wing faction of the Agrarian Party. Because of that, he was exiled from the Faculty of Law in Belgrade during the period of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. It is also known that he was executed by shooting in Belgrade, in 1943.

The paper, based on the documents from the Historical Archives of the City of Belgrade, the State Archives of Serbia, the Archives of Yugoslavia and the Military Archives of Serbia, shows that, from the very beginning of World War Two (WW2) in Yugoslavia, he was constantly followed by the Special Police and Gestapo, as well as that he was arrested twice. He was accused both by Gestapo and by German and Serbian informants of being a mason, a participant in the events of 27 March 1941 a communist, an anti-fascist and an anti-Nazi, whereas the last two accusations were absolutely true. The first time he was arrested in November 1941, when he was taken hostage with a large group of intellectuals. He was taken to the Banjica concentration camp, but was released 23 days later. Afterwards he was also interrogated by the collaborationist Special Police, which is proved by the records kept.

Since there is various information in the literature regarding the date and the place of Tasić's execution, and there are no related documents in the archives or those documents are

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rather scarce, according to the reconstruction and the comparison of the data sources, we can quite certainly claim that he was not executed in the Banjica camp in 1944. The most reliable information was submitted in 1953 by his pre-war assistant and subsequently academician Radomir Lukić – that Professor Đorđe Tasić was arrested by Gestapo the second time on 25 August 1943 and executed by shooting the following day. It is highly probable, in the light of historical research regarding this location, to say that the execution occurred in the Sajmište concentration camp, which is also a hypothesis by Lukić published in 1984.

The free spirit and the anti-fascist orientation of this great Yugoslav and Serbian intellectual were a sufficient reason to Gestapo to execute him by shooting.

KEYWORDS: Professor Đorđe Tasić, Yugoslav (Serbian) pre-war sociologists, occupier's crimes over Serbian intellectuals, World War Two, anti-fascism.

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

In this paper we do not deal with the scientific contribution of Đorđe Tasić, Professor and pre-war Dean (1938-1941) of the Faculty of Law, the University of Belgrade, as a theoretician of law and a sociologist³, particularly legal sociologist, which he definitely is and where he made a great contribution (see, for example, Lukić, 1959; Lukić, 1978; Lukić, 1984/1995⁴; Basta, 1994; Vasić, 1995; Vračar, 1997; Dimitrijević, 2003). We will not deal with his contribution to the establishment of the Society for Sociology and Social Sciences (1938) and the launching of the journal *Sociološki pregled / Sociological Review* (1938), which has already been the subject of other studies and papers (e.g., Mitrović, 1982: 125-127; Antonić, 2018a; Trkulja, Šuvaković, 2018). In this paper we deal with Tasić's humanist-leftist orientation and, consequently, his execution as an anti-fascist by Gestapo⁵ in 1943.

Professor Tasić had a respectable scientific and teaching career in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. He was elected Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Law in Subotica, Associate and Full Professor and Dean at the Faculty of Law in Ljubljana and, upon invitation, he was appointed Full Professor at the Faculty of Law in Belgrade and served three mandates as its dean.

³ In the academic year of 1940/41, at the Faculty of Law, Professor Tasić taught General Sociology, and it was the first and only generation of students attending this subject as compulsory in the first year of studies before the outbreak of WW2 (Kandić, 2002a: 215; Popić, Šuvaković, 2014: 378). "The war prevented Tasic from completing his lectures, and the students from taking this examination" (Antonić, 2018: 8)

⁴ First published by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in 1984 as Lukić's foreword to the edited book by Đorđe Tasić. In our paper, the source used is Book 9 of Lukić's *Collected Works*, which includes the reprint of the text about Đorđe Tasić.

⁵ Geheime Staatspolizei, a Secret State Police of Nazi Germany in Serbia and other occupied Europe.

Tasić had progressive ideas in all fields, which is reflected in his theory, among other things, in the introduction of the sociological method in the study of law, which was a novelty at the time, while he does not reject either the normative or the dogmatic method, but “managed to merge both main methods in law into a harmonious whole, to connect the most relevant results of the most prominent jurists of his time and to date, Duguit and Kelsen, and their schools, thus making the foundations for a whole and complete theory of law that would overcome one-sidedness of both methods respectively. To that end, Tasić’s results in the theory of law are so important that they exceed the boundaries of our science and assume the European character” (Lukić, 1978: 2)⁶.

Tasić always showed his prowess for social activism. Namely, from the very beginning of the foundation of the Society for Social Upbringing as early as 1918, he participated in its work, first as a student, and then as an assistant. Although this Society was composed of the members of different conceptual orientations, “the Society’s founders and main pillars of its work were socialists/communists and, subsequently, members of the Alliance of Agrarians” (Milenković, 1989: 123-124). Despite the domination written about by Milenković, it is necessary to see the idea and political-party diversity of the members of this Society. It gathered the intellectuals whose political development will proceed in totally different directions: Mihailo Avramović was the President of the Cooperative Union and the founder of the Alliance of Agrarians; Živko Topalović went all the way from a social democrat to the ideologist of the *chetnik* movement of Draža Mihailović; Sima Marković was the first Secretary General of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and was killed in the Stalin’s purges in the Soviet Union; Mirko Kosić, a member of the National Radical Party, subsequently an MP of the Yugoslav National Party (“Court Party”) on Bogoljub Jevtić’s list, and the Vice Governor of the National Bank of Serbia during the puppet Quisling government of Milan Nedić. Speaking of political parties, Tasić was a member of the Agrarian Party (the Alliance of Agrarians) from 1920 onwards (Milenković, 1989: 123-124), namely its left wing (“leftist agrarians”), whose attitudes were represented by Dragoljub Jovanović (Milosavljević, 2015: 464; see: Simeunović, 2019).

ĐORĐE TASIĆ AND MIRKO KOSIĆ: TWO DIFFERENT POLITICAL AND MORAL CHOICES

However, in Tasić’s Society for Sociology and Social Sciences there was no Mirko Kosić, just as there are no texts of his in the *Sociološki pregled / Sociological Review* 1/1938, although in his paper Slobodan M. Drašković mentions Kosić twice (Jovanović, 2018: 54). The reasons, and thus the assumptions, may be different: Božidar S. Marković, one of the first associates of the *Sociološki pregled / Sociological Review* and the Society for

⁶ This scientific approach by Tasić led Miljković to state that “if someone should be said to have been a pluralist in science, it should be Đorđe Tasić” (Miljković, 1988:197).

Sociology and Social Sciences as its publisher, explains this absence by Kosić's "temper" (Janićijević, Miljković, 1978: 18), while Milić almost decisively thinks that the cause can be found in his idea conservatism, which also led Mirko Kosić to collaborate and emigrate (Milić, 1996: 5), as opposed to the progressive orientation of the majority in the Society⁷. The thesis is not rejected either by Jovanović (Ibid.), while his mentor, denying Milić's attitude, tries to offer a purely practical attitude: all the associates of the Society for Sociology and Social Sciences were from Belgrade and most of them worked at the Faculty of Law in Belgrade, while Kosić lived in Subotica (Antonić, 2013: 406). Trkulja, for his part, indicates that at the time of Tasić's activities regarding the planned foundation of the Society for Sociology and Social Sciences and the launching of the *Sociološki pregled / Sociological Review*, Kosić "distanced himself from the academic and publicist work and delved into political waters" (Trkulja, 2012: 38).

Nevertheless, there is a drastic difference in the life destinies of Kosić and Tasić; the former collaborated with the occupier and emigrated before the liberation of Belgrade in 1944, while the latter was executed by shooting by the same occupiers and collaborationists!

Kosić's collaboration is undeniable: not only was he the Vice Governor and *de facto* Governor of Nedić's Serbian Bank, but he also received direct orders from Neuhausen, the German plenipotentiary for economic affairs in Serbia, and Soengen, the German Commissioner of the Serbian Bank (Glišić, 2013: 162-168). It seems that he allowed the chetniks to rob the bank's money, of which he particularly boasted abroad (Glišić, 2013:

⁷ Citing parts of the texts from the Introduction to the *Sociološki pregled / Sociological Review* 1/1938, Milić states that they marked "the highest degree of progressiveness that could be reached in the class conscience of the Serbian bourgeoisie before WW2" (Milić, 1996: 5). Critically reviewing the first issue of the *Sociološki pregled / Sociological Review* from 1938, he still believes that "it was wrong to transfer the justified rejection of the conservative and regressive political orientation [of Kosić and Ž. Perić, added by U.Š.] automatically to their scientific work on the whole, without a previous careful analysis, and thus the value of certain papers was decreased or they were not spoken about" (Milić, *Ibid.*; cf. Šutović, 2013: 267). Milić objects because, in his "General Overview of Our Sociology and Our Social Sciences", published in the first issue of the *Sociološki pregled / Sociological Review* (Tasić, 1938), Tasić did not pay more attention to the works of the listed authors. However, in that article he points to the predecessors of the development of sociology in our country, mentioning, first of all, Vuk Karadžić, and, in the end, Tihomir Đorđević. At the beginning of this paper, Tasić thinks that "out of the younger ones, *primarily* (italics by U.Š.) Mr. M. Kosić should be mentioned" (Tasić, 1938: 239), announcing the review of his works in the references. In this paper, Tasić even cites Kosić (see Tasić, 1938: 244), while in the References, within the Textbook in Serbo-Croatian, he describes Kosić's *Introduction to Sociology* as "representing the first original systematic paper from sociology in our country" (1938: 323), and he also adds that Kosić's paper *Problems of Modern Sociology* can be a supplement to his own Introduction. From the aspect of scope, as well as the critical attitude, Kosić's work is presented more positively than that of Sorokin. Given Tasić's announcement that the following issues of the *Sociološki pregled / Sociological Review* would be dedicated to the work of other authors, Milić's observation about Kosić's oeuvre being underestimated is certainly unacceptable. Simply speaking, there were those who had to be presented before Kosić in the first issue in sociological terms.

170); however, is it not financing the collaborationists? Glišić also says that enabling the chetniks to rob the money of the Serbian Bank reached its peak in 1944, “when the formation of the Serbian National Front started by Nedić’s, Ljotić’s and chetnik armed forces for the purpose of opposing together the units of the National Liberation Movement advancing into Serbia” (Glišić, 2013: 170). During the war, Kosić also helped elderly Aca Stanojević (Glišić, 2013: 169), President of the pre-war People’s Radical Party and Pašić’s associate, who was invited by Tito to take part in the post-war government at the age of over 90, in an attempt to provide himself with the alibi after the war clearly to be lost by the Germans. There is no evidence whatsoever that Kosić helped the only consistently anti-fascist movement, i.e., the partisans – if he had, he would definitely not have emigrated, or he would at least have used it to protect himself; therefore, the assumptions in that respect, aimed at explaining why Kosić did not stand trial after the war, in his absence, should be understood more like anecdotes (Gordić, 2013: 243). Gordić is certainly right when claiming that Kosić was not merely a collaborationist of Nedić’s occupation regime” (Gordić, 2013: 218). The Germans robbed Serbia through him, which was perfectly proved by Glišić (2013). It did not occur to Kosić at any time that he should resign. The claims about Kosić’s anti-German feelings, anti-Nazism etc. can be brought into question after fall: between 25 March and 27 March, he chose the Tripartite Pact⁸ (see Pejin, 2003: 92); he Nazism and Bolshevism equal, “at the same time attacking them as non-democratic systems” (Glišić, 2013: 157); he thinks that Momčilo Ninčić should be the Prime Minister because he was close to (Fascist) Italy and “believed in Germany’s victory” (Pejin, 2003: 88; Kosić, s.a.: 12-13); He does not glorify only Nedić (which was logical, having in mind that he was the Vice Governor in Nedić’s puppet government), but also Dimitrije Ljotić, a staunch fascist (see Kosić, s.a.: 34), even after the end of the war, etc. Kosić’s pre-war theoretical criticism of German expansionism and the prediction that Germany would cause the war cannot conceal his practical action and open collaboration with the Germans. As for the motives of such cooperation, they can certainly be re-examined (Trkulja, 2013: 77-79) and benevolently considered (“sacrifice for the people”, as Kosić himself explained his collaboration that involved high proceeds and visits to foreign spas during his holidays, while the people suffered under the oppressor), but we do not see how it affects the objective fact of his collaboration with the occupier of his own country. Rather than attempting to state the obvious, we would happily accept Njegoš’s conclusion that “the fear in life often stains one’s honour”. As a matter of fact, while conducting our research, we did not find a single indicator that Kosić did not address any German or Nedić’s authorities, to which he also belonged, in order to save Tasić’s life; moreover, he did not attempt to save the lives of his associates through whom he allegedly was in contact with Draža Mihailović’s movement. He fled abroad in 1944, while the ones that stayed in the country were held responsible for their actions, according to him, at Kosić’s instruction (e.g., B. Litričin,

⁸ On March 25, 1941, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia joined the “triple pact” of the Axis powers; On March 27, a military coup overthrew the Cvetković-Maček government, which had previously accepted the “triple pact”.

M. Marković, M. Balzarena)⁹, just as he had been left in the country by the royal government, although he had already arrived in Nikšić, from where the royal government fled abroad in 1941.

There were certain similarities between Kosić and Tasić as well. First of all, they both lectured at the faculties of law; they both were interested in sociology, and that was the field in which he wrote our first pre-war textbook *Introduction to General Sociology* and also launched the journal *Social Life* and Sociological Society, despite its failure; a decade and a half after him, Tasić published the first issue of the *Sociološki pregled / Sociological Review* and established the Society for Sociology and Social Sciences, which have maintained their existence through the eponymous journal and the Serbian Sociological Association, while before his death he also worked on a special book dedicated to the introduction to sociology (Lukić, 1959: 4). Moreover, both of them had their works published abroad and had a rich international sociological career, while Kosić, since he had acquired his doctoral degree in Switzerland, had more publications in the German-speaking region (his books were published in Germany both before and after WW2); his influence is supported by the fact that his obituary was written by Leopold von Wiese. Tasić's works were published mostly in Francophone journals (although some of his works were published in the German-speaking region too), and the first bibliography of his works was published posthumously in the French journal *Sociologie et Droit Slaves* Nos. 4/1946 and 1/1947 (Stepanov, 1992: 40). Both of them were interested in politics: Kosić was in power, as a Radical, while Tasić was in the opposition, as an Agrarian. From 1930s onwards, Kosić reduced his scientific activities and dealt more with politics instead, while Tasić still actively dealt with science, building his scientific career and becoming the Dean of the Faculty of Law in Belgrade; after WW2, Kosić was in emigration and had his works published mostly in German; he appealed to those emigrants who participated in and supported the coup of 27 March, accusing some of having done it for money, particularly pointing to the Agrarian Party and some of its leaders, labelling them as British agents¹⁰, accusing masons of ruling Yugoslavia, particularly during the dictatorship, but also of controlling political parties etc. (Kosić, s.a.). Both of them signed the *Appeal to the Serbian nation*¹¹ organized by Velibor Jonić; while Tasić did it only upon insistence after calling for some modifications of the text; when interrogated by the Special Police¹², he explained that he had not agreed with the proposed text and that his interventions were accepted later (Minutes from the

⁹ They were executed after the war “without a trial”, according to Kosić, while Glišić gives arguments for suspecting that it was “without a trial”, just as he suspects the number of the bank clerks who were, according to Kosić, executed by shooting (Glišić, 2013: 173).

¹⁰ The claim that Đorđe Tasić was executed by shooting “because of belonging to the English intelligence service network” is made by Nenezić (Nenezić, 1988: 480) within his argumentation that no masons were killed in Belgrade due to their membership in that organization.

¹¹ Proclamation that appealed to the Serbian people to respect the occupation authorities.

¹² Collaborationist police under the direction of the Quisling government of General Nedić during World War II, in charge of persecuting anti-fascists, communists and other patriots. In fact, she carried out GESTAPO orders.

interrogation, 31 December 1941, IAB-UGB-1171-1)¹³. By then Kosić had already been Nedić's Vice Governor, whereas Tasić was "available" as the Professor of the University.

WHEN WAS PROFESSOR ĐORĐE TASIĆ EXILED FROM THE FACULTY OF LAW IN BELGRADE?

The literature usually mentions the information that Professor Đorđe Tasić, immediately after the occupation of the country in 1941, was exiled from the University of Belgrade. However, this is not exactly true. Namely, the occupier attempted to find a way of how to subordinate the freedom-oriented University of Belgrade to the Nazi goals, which also implied the replacement of the teaching staff. That "university reform", first attempted by Aćimović's Quisling Commissary administration, and then by Nedić's Quisling Council of Ministers, was strongly opposed by the University of Belgrade, and one of the proponents of this resistance was Đorđe Tasić, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

We tried to reconstruct when exactly Đorđe Tasić was exiled from the University of Belgrade. According to the Minutes from the session of the University Administration, he participated in its work as the Dean of the Faculty of Law on 9 August 1941, but not on 8 October 1941, when Aćimović, the Dean of the Faculty of Law in Subotica, participated in its work (DAS, G-200, Minutes of the University Administration, book 27). Did he substitute Tasić? Particularly having in mind that on 19 July 1941 the Council of Commissioners merged the Faculty of Law in Subotica to the Faculty of Law in Belgrade, at the proposal of the Senate of the University of Belgrade (Kandić, 2005: 181). The last session of the Council of the Faculty of Law chaired by Professor Đorđe Tasić as the Dean was held on 16 June 1941 (DAS, G-205, Minutes 1939-1943, book no. 7). In her monograph, Ljubica Kandić states that Milan Todorović, PhD, was appointed the Dean on 16 July 1941 (Kandić, 2005: 255). A possible explanation for Tasić's participation in the work of the University Administration on 9 August 1941 is probably Professor Todorović's dilemma about whether to accept the dean function (Kandić, 2005: 316). Nevertheless, he performed that duty until the moment Laza Kostić, PhD, was appointed for the Dean of the Faculty of Law in Belgrade¹⁴, by the decision of Nedić's collabora-

¹³ The record states that Tasić's claim about being possibly the very first who had such an idea, while citing the testimony of Micić, the Rector of the University of Belgrade, and that it was the reason why he asked to see Dimitrije Ljotić, who received him later, after the text had already been written.

¹⁴ Professor Kandić indicates that Tasić "was available, just like other professors of the University of Belgrade" (Kandić, 2005: 255). To ensure the functioning of the Faculty of Law in line with the envisaged Quisling reform and to set up the main committee for the appointment of other teachers at the Faculty of Law in Belgrade, 1st March 1942, Nedić's government appointed as full professors at the Faculty of Law in Belgrade those who were no longer only "available", without a public invitation: Milan Todorović, PhD, Laza Kostić, PhD (the School of Economics and Commerce a) and Nikola Radojčić (from the Faculty of Philosophy). The fact that only one of them was the

tionist government M.S. No. 856/42 from May 1942, who took office on 1 June 1942 (DAS, G-205, f.16). Therefore, Tasić was dismissed from the position of the Dean in July 1941, but he continued working as Full Professor and performing his teaching duties at the Faculty of Law. It can be seen from the invitation to the session of the Council of the Faculty of Law, scheduled by Dean M. Todorović for 1 May 1942, and Đorđe Tasić still attended it. By signing the invitation personally, Tasić confirmed the receipt of the notification and at that session he was elected the member of the committee for examining Velimir Vasić's doctoral thesis entitled "Guest workers migrating from East Serbia" (DAS, G-205, Minutes 1939-1943, book no. 7). His signature confirming the receipt is also found on the notification about the activities organized by the Red Cross of 22 August 1942. At the session of the Council of the Faculty of Law on 10 October 1942, he was chosen for as many as three (out of four) committees for the defence of the applicants' doctoral examinations (DAS, G-205 Minutes 1939-1943, book no. 7). In the letter of the Secretary of the Faculty of Law No. 1815. of 2 November 1942 to the Secretariat of the University of Belgrade, the address book of the teaching staff at the Faculty of Law is submitted, which contains the name and the address of Đorđe Tasić (DAS, G-205, f. 16). In his letter to the Rector of the University of Belgrade of 26 November 1942, Dean Kostić reports about the scientific work of the teachers of the Faculty of Law, and points out that "3) Đorđe Tasić, PhD, available Full Professor, continued his work on the preparation of lectures and scientific publications from the subjects of Sociology and State Law" (DAS, G-205, f. 16)

Tasić tried to stay at the Faculty of Law, so he applied for the public invitation for the Full Professor for the subject General Sociology, in the Department of General Sociology and Statistics, which was opened in June 1942; he was proposed for the appointment unanimously by the relevant bodies of the Faculty and by the majority of those from the University, but Velibor Jonić, the Minister of Education, did not approve of his appointment (Kandić, 2005: 210-211). By the decision of Nedić's Council of Ministers M.s. No. 4486/42 of 3 December 1942, Đorđe Tasić had to retire, and by the decision of the Dean of the Faculty of Law, Milan Todorović, PhD (sic!), No. 2035/42 of 11 January 1943, he was relieved of his duties at the Faculty of Law in Belgrade (DAS-G-200, University of Belgrade, Rector's Office)¹⁵. Therefore, we can state that it was only at the end of 1942 or

pre-war Full Professor of the Faculty of Law in Belgrade – M. Todorović, PhD (who acquired his doctoral degree in Munich in 1908), shows that "German and Nedić's authorities evidently did not trust the pre-war full professors of the Faculty of Law" (Kandić, 2005: 315).

¹⁵ The following is interesting in this act: the Dean listed in it is Milan Todorović, PhD, but without his personal signature, at the time when Laza Kostić, PhD, was the Dean. The only signature found belongs to the then Secretary of the Faculty of Law, who claims that "the transcript is identical to the original" (DAS, G-200, University of Belgrade, Rector's Office). We have seen that some of the acts from that period were signed by Milan Todorović, PhD, as the "Dean's representative" (e.g., Act No. 2015 of 26 December 1942, DAS, G-205, f. 16), but not as the Dean, since his function had ceased half a year before. Does the absence of the signatures of two professors prove that it was an act of disagreement, or even opposition to such a decision? Based on the historical material, it is difficult to answer this question, but the Council of the Faculty of Law definitely proposed

the very beginning of 1943 that Tasić, by the decision of the collaborationist authorities and contrary to his colleagues' opinions, dismissed from his position of the Full Professor at the University of Belgrade.

WHY WAS ĐORĐE TASIĆ PERSECUTED?

From the material kept in the Historical Archives of the City of Belgrade (see IAB-UGB-1171-1) it is possible to find four accusations against Tasić. His name can be found in the archives of BdS¹⁶ and is also mentioned in the agents' tips in which he is not the main subject, but is mentioned, thus making it sufficient for undertaking measures in the further investigation against him.

(1) On 22 August 1942, SS officer Nadler reported that Vojislav Đorđević, President of the Union of Agrarian Cooperatives, had removed Dragiša Cvetković's photograph from the place of the Honorary President because Cvetković "had signed the pact with Germany", while at the same time the honorary places were held by fleeing ministers, Jews and others, including Đorđe Tasić, the University Professor "who was labelled as a Marxist";

(2) Professor Ljubomir Dukanac was arrested on 27 March 1944. In one note of BdS of 8 June 1943 (before Tasić's execution), Dukanac is said to be the representative of the Democratic left wing and "had closely cooperated with Đorđe Tasić, PhD", who, on his part, "was a close associate of Konstantinović, PhD, a representative of free masons in the Government". After his arrest, suspected of being a member of the Communist Party, Dukanac was interrogated about whether he cooperated with Đorđe Tasić, PhD, and what the nature of their cooperation was. Dukanac answered that "it was true that he had cooperated with Đorđe Tasić, but in the field of science, which had nothing to do with politics". It is interesting to observe that Croatian words were used in the occupation minutes in the midst of Belgrade;

(3) Mihailo Ilić, PhD, is denounced as the "leader of the leftist elements at the University", but this qualification is added "to Đorđe Tasić's name". This denunciation made by an associate under the code "141" contains the following accusations because of which lives were lost at that time: "...Of particular importance is not his (Ilić's, added by U.Š.) political work familiar to all, *but his pursuance of the entirely leftist politics through other colleagues and younger associates, i.e., he was the one, tougher with Đorđe Tasić and the Communist party of Yugoslavia, in charge of the entire destructive action in Serbia*" (italics by U.Š.). In the same denunciation of Professor Mihailo Ilić, the following is concluded: "Once again it should be noted that, together with the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and masonic lodges, in the company of Slobodan Jovanović, Minister

unanimously Đorđe Tasić, PhD, for the appointment in the public competition, according to the reports submitted by Laza Kostić, PhD (as well as by N. Radojčić).

¹⁶ Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei und der Sicherheitsdienst (BdS) – Commander of the Security Police and Security Service

Konstantinović and *Đorđe Tasić*, in the past few years he was the leader of all those in Serbia who were left-oriented and opposed to National Socialism, fascism and the German Reich” (IAB-1177-I-99 Mihailo Ilic).

(4) In the archives of the post-war UDBA, there is a note of the pre-war police about the public figures of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia who attended the 20th anniversary of the formation of the Red Army on 22 February 1941. The list also includes Đorđe Tasić. The note must have been available to the Special Police that interrogated Tasić on the last day of 1941.

In addition to the above-mentioned, (5) Dušan Matić was interrogated by the Special Police as early as 24 August 1941. In the Note from the interrogation, he says that he cooperated with the journal “Our Reality”¹⁷ that, according to him, was “just a progressive journal with no communist tendencies”. When listing the associates of this journal, Matić mentioned Siniša Stanković, PhD, Mihailo Ilić, PhD, Đorđe Tasić, PhD, Jaša Prodanović and others “well-known authors who are not communists” (IAB UGB SP - IV-11/5 i 192/26).

Previously, on 4 November 1941, Professor Đorđe Tasić (Denković, 1971: 320) and a group of 172 intellectuals (34 University Professors), highly positioned pre-war officials, doctors, merchants, bankers, judges, lawyers etc., were taken hostage by Gestapo and sent to the Banjica camp (Dimić, Ristović, 2009: 48). On that occasion he was kept in the camp for 23 days. He was released by the SS on 27 November of the same year (Certificate, 2021)¹⁸.

¹⁷ Aleksandar Vučo was the owner and editor of the journal.

¹⁸ Tasić was arrested as a member of the “mason” group (Begović, 1989: 160), which points to his belonging to the mason organization. Nenezić also labelled him as a mason in his monograph dedicated to the history of masonry in Yugoslavia, ascribing great significance to the pre-war masonry in Yugoslavia for reaching the agreement Cvetković-Maček – it was “composed of a special mason committee, in which the Serbian side was represented by Mihailo Konstantinović, PhD, Mihailo Ilić, PhD, and Đorđe Tasić, PhD” (Nenezić, 1988: 431). In his monograph, Nenezić publishes as an appendix the list entitled “Free masons in Belgrade”, which lists the name of Professor Đorđe Tasić under number 387 (Nenezić, 1988: 576). However, when classifying the masons into lodge, Nenezić does not mention Tasić’s name in any of the then active lodges (including the lodge “Dositej Obradović”, to which Tasić allegedly belonged, as stated on some Facebook pages today, e.g., https://m.facebook.com/110306604154248/photos/pb.110306604154248.-2207520000../499190558599182/?type=3&eid=ARA8mb4t-ln6RRhgAOep-feUIE6xP6FoMjhJ1jNR_W31TpIjx8CtPg4KKZ0Kr4b9Qk-AQjScp-YbJkLEX&locale=ms_MY). Nenezić list “Nedić’s material” as his source. We found out that this list was kept in the Military Archives in Belgrade (VA), fund Nda, K 20 A, F 2, D 23. *We are grateful to Marijana Mraović, PhD*, Archive Consultant of the Military Archives in Belgrade, for her collegiate help in finding this source. Nenezić repeats the same claim later on (Nenezić, 2002). The claim from this document speaks in favour of Tasić’s close ties with Ivan Ribar, PhD, Mihailo Konstantinović, PhD, Mihailo Ilić, PhD, to name but a few of the pronounced members of masonry of that time. However, having in mind the time of its creation – when denunciations occurred on a daily basis, and the document was prepared within the work of the Quisling government – the research honesty calls for suspicion; in addition, it is necessary to express methodological suspicion and formulate criticism

Because of these and other accusations, the tips of which have not been kept, was interrogated by the Special Police. We have already cited the minutes from the interrogation dated 31 December 1941 (IAB-UGB-1171-1).

The first question Tasić was asked by the interrogator was how he had come to a situation to sign the request for permission to found the Association of the Friends of the Soviet Union in Belgrade, whether he had initiated it and what his relations with the co-signatories were like. The interrogator emphasized that this was “the very first reason” for interrogating Tasić, who answered that he had done it at the request of Ivan Ribar, PhD (also in the list of the guests attending the celebration of the anniversary of Red Army foundation), that Yugoslavia used to have diplomatic relations with the USSR, but also pointed out that at that time “even the most famous publishers in Germany advocated the thesis of cooperation between the German state and the Soviet Union”, evidently having in mind the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact and propaganda conducted for the purpose of its affirmation. Tasić suggested that the Association should be called “Russian-Serbian Association”, but it was never founded. He also indicates that he had already been interrogated on those grounds while held hostage in the Banjica camp.

Then Tasić was asked as the Dean of the Faculty of Law whether he had favoured the students-communists and leftists, which he categorically denied. He drew attention to the fact that in many of his works he had criticized Marxists viewpoints and that in his theory he had connected sociology with idealism, while also dealing with religious matters and underlining the importance of nationalism. He also pointed out that he had problems with left-oriented students who even organized demonstrations against him as the dean. In addition, he emphasized his viewpoint that youth should have a critical attitude, but never put ideology above the national interest, that students – although

(primarily internal) of this historical source. This is further necessary because in the relevant fund of the Archives of Yugoslavia (AJ 100-15, 16, 17, 18), Đorđe Tasić's file cannot be found (among the total of 411 files) and his name is not mentioned either in the interviews conducted after WW2 with the pre-war members of the masonic lodges or the connoisseurs of the circumstances in relation to the masons, where contradictions are also present (e.g., when comparing the statements of AJ 100-15, fis. 471 and fis. 478, the former claims that Slobodan Jovanović and Mihailo Konstantinović were not members of the free masons, while the latter claims exactly the opposite). In her article, Nadežda Jovanović points out that the lists of the masons in Yugoslavia were made by the police “at the height of the anti-mason campaign in 1940”, and by the German intelligence centres abroad from 1939 onwards, and that based on those lists “some people who had nothing to do with masonry were ranked among masons”, for example Branko Čubrilović, Dragomir Drinčić and Slobodan Jovanović. The name of Slobodan Jovanović is also mentioned in Nenezić's book, in the list taken from “Nedić's material”, but neither he nor Tasić was labelled as a member of the masonic lodges at the time. In September 1941, the preparation of the lists of masons was taken over by the Ministry of Home Affairs of Nedić's Quisling government. In fact, according to Victor Novak's testimony as cited by Nadežda Jovanović, before the war, the citizens submitted as many as a hundred thousand mason denunciations to the German Embassy in Belgrade (Jovanović, 1971: 85-86). Professor Konstantinović himself denied belonging to masonry (Konstantinović, 1998: 299). The list made at the Faculty of Law with the names of the members of the masonic lodges does not contain the name of Professor Đorđe Tasić (DAS, G-205, f. 16).

they should deal with sociological matters – should not be members of political parties. He points out that he had been a member of the Senate of the University of Belgrade, which always unanimously took a critical attitude towards the left wing.

Later Lukić explained Tasić's theoretical-conceptual position. "Although he was sociologically oriented and ascribed by far the greatest importance to social factors in his explanation of law and resolved many problems almost in a Marxist manner or a manner quite close to Marxism, Đorđe Tasić was not a Marxist in the strict sense of the word. However, since he was close to Marxism, he followed with plenty of understanding what occurred in Marxism of the time and indicated new roads in social sciences. Influenced by him as a teacher, many students did not have difficulty later in finding a road to true Marxism and, in that respect, his influence was significant" (Lukić, 1978: 5-6)¹⁹. However, Lukić also points out that there was no class division in Tasić's explanation of sociality, which is one of the basic criteria of Marxism (see Lukić, 1984/1995: 608). Moreover, he casts light on Tasić's conflict with left-oriented students; during the interrogation in the Special Police, he tried to present that conflict in his favour in order to save his life. Namely, according to Lukić, Tasić as the dean supported the activities of the progressive student youth, yet had a conflict with them because of signing the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact. Since the directive from Moscow was to support the pact, the pro-communist students at the Faculty of Law proceeded in line with it, while the pact was condemned by their dean and professor, both as someone able to predict future events and as an anti-fascist. The students attacked him because of supporting the "Anglo-French thesis" (according to Kandić, 2002b: 101), not realizing the only proper attitude – that there was no compromise with fascism. Therefore, it is true when Tasić says that he had a conflict with the left-oriented students, but it was not because of "Guépratte's" celebration, as he presented it, but because he was against the Soviet Union's pact with Hitler's Germany. This simultaneously demonstrates his independence as an intellectual, but also his anti-fascism. Nevertheless, according to the minutes from the sessions of the University Council at the end of 1939, Đorđe Tasić actually defended the students who stood up against the regime in power, organized demonstrations and published opposition newspapers. As the Dean of the Faculty of Law, he claimed that such acting was "in charge of the court and not the Senate". Advocating for "utter strictness towards the students", Tasić emphasized that "it was impossible to try someone immediately, without a proper interrogation. Some things must be tolerated to a certain extent... Not all those labelled as communists are really communists... We should try and judge only partially something that is done unlawfully. Our task is to enable them for work and love for this country" (DAS, G-200, Minutes from the sessions of the University Council, book 8). There is no dilemma that here Tasić acted like the students' advocate although he himself was exposed to their criticism. He refused the idea of the University bodies should discuss the students' political responsibility, but is in favour of interrogation, trial etc., having in mind that these processes were

¹⁹ Two decades before Lukić, in his interview to the employee of the State Archives of the City of Belgrade, writer Sima Pandurović spoke about Tasić's cooperation with the journal "Misao" and said that Tasić later "advocated socialist ideas" (IAB, MG, K-3/II, 9).

long-lasting; in that way, a larger number of the students who took part in the protests would thus be released of responsibility. That is why he insisted on their differentiation. On 20 October of the same year, Tasić, Dean of the Faculty of Law in Belgrade at the time, signed a request calling for the general amnesty of political prisoners (Simonović, 1982: 25; Semis, 1997: 119; Dimitrijević, 2004: 28). It is unnecessary to emphasize that the majority of political prisoners at the time were communists.

Then the interrogator asked Tasić about his collegiate and political relationship with Professor Mihailo Konstantinović, PhD. Tasić answered that he was on good collegiate terms with the professor, that as an expert for division of power (competences) he was engaged in the propagation of the Serbian-Croatian agreement, where Konstantinović also represented the Serbian side. However, he had not seen him for several months and had no influence on him as a member of the government; on the contrary, during the mandate of Dragiša Cvetković (with Konstantinović in the government), Tasić was constantly attacked by the press, but no one wanted to protect him.

“Some time ago, in Istanbul, a GPU agent spoke to a university professor who told him that you received money from abroad and it was used for unknown purposes”. This is what the interrogator said, asking Tasić for an explanation about the way in which he spent that money. Of course, Tasić denied that allegation, saying that no honourable man would act like that, and that the allegation was offensive; even if he was not honourable, such conduct would be stupid. Someone had obviously denounced Tasić.

However, it is interesting that even after the interrogation in the Special Police, following Tasić's release from the Banjica camp, BdS was still interested in Đorđe Tasić. The material kept in the Historical Archives of the City of Belgrade (IAB-UGB-SP-IV-11-66-k.194-25) shows that the Germans asked Nedić's Special Police to provide the data about Tasić's attendance at the “anti-communist meeting of the educational staff”, held on 16 December 1941 at the Kolarac People's University, where Đorđe Tasić verified the minutes. It is not clear whether the Special Police were familiar with Tasić's attendance at that gathering at the time of his interrogation on 31 December 1941 (it is not mentioned at all in the Minutes from the interrogation), while the act in which BdS submits its findings for examination is dated 21 January 1942 (translated into Serbian on 28 January 1941). In the obvious denunciation of Tasić, the German document states the following: “The anti-communist meeting was chaired by the Rector of the University of Belgrade, Petar Mičić (it should be written Micić (instead, note by U.Š.); everyone is sufficiently familiar with the fact that he tolerated the students-communists and did not defend the nationally-oriented students from terror. Đorđe Tasić kept the minutes of that meeting. It was commonly known that Tasić was one of the leaders of the left-oriented youth, as well as one of the advocates of the foundation of the Association of the Friends of the Soviet Union. He was also involved in the events of 27th March. The continuation of such politics meant the destruction of the still existing small national forces. All honourable people had to lose faith in the struggle against communism if they realized that even now, under the German occupation, the same politics was pursued as

previously in Yugoslavia, particularly that it was led by the same people as in Yugoslavia. I will also point out that, if these intellectual communists are not executed or if they are not destroyed, all the responsibility for potential unrest in Serbia will be borne by the German authorities that will not or cannot destroy those communists". From this document, written in German and then translated into Serbian evidently by someone who was not a Serbian native speaker, it is absolutely obvious that the denouncer was calling, virtually encouraging the Germans to kill Tasić, and even Micić, accusing them of communism, regardless of the fact that they had chaired "the anti-communist meeting", as it can be seen from the German report. After the check-up, the Special Police in its act II, No. 1023/1942 of 28 May 1942²⁰ notified BdS about the persons who were the subject of interest. Thus, Professor Branko Popović is qualified as a "great nationalist and fighter against communists", and it is emphasized that he is "now the Dean of the Technical Faculty", Petar Micić is qualified "not as a communist, but as some time ago being under a huge influence of the students-communists, with no courage to resist their terror, since through their propaganda they kept the entire University of Belgrade under their influence for a number of years". As for Đorđe Tasić, the Special Police answered that he was "well-known as a follower of the earlier Agrarian Party and a collaborator of the left-oriented students, more in theoretical than in practical terms. As one of the signatories of the appeal for the foundation of the Association of the Friends of the Soviet Union, he was arrested by this Administration and held responsible, but there was no concrete evidence about his being a communist, so he was released. In the same way, the conducted survey could not establish either that he was involved in the events of 27 March". In the reply, there is an explanation for Milić Majstorović, the teacher who was also claimed not to be a communist, but was qualified as a leftist. According to the above-mentioned, the Special Police denied the allegations from the denunciation against Đorđe Tasić. However, it did not stop Božidar Boško Bećarević, the main villain in the Special Police and a close associate of Gestapo (who was tried as a war criminal and executed by shooting after the war) from writing personally the following instruction on the file cover: "All the persons listed here, except for Branko Popović, University Professor, should be qualified as close to communists, and the subject should be filed as 'University and college professors known as communists'". That largely sealed Đorđe Tasić's fate.

It could be said almost certainly that BdS was not satisfied with the answer of the Special Police and that it most likely continued following Tasić; on the other hand, Bećarević classified the file either in collusion with Gestapo or in order to act upon such suspicions.

In any case, the outstanding post-war communist official, the President of the Presidency of the Socialist Republic of Serbia²¹, Dušan Čkrebić, emphasizes in his last book that during the period of the Užice Republic, when attempts were made to establish the Main People's Liberation Committee for Serbia, the partisans intended "to take

²⁰ It can be stated that they took time to answer since the answer came four months later.

²¹ In the socialist period, after the adoption of the Constitution of 1974, all Yugoslav republics had presidencies, as collective heads of states-republics.

to the free territory and include in the liberation struggle the renowned public figures and professors of the University of Belgrade – Siniša Stanković, Đorđe Tasić, Dragoljub Jovanović, Ivan Ribar, PhD and others” (Čkrebčić, 2018: 62). The partisans indisputably wanted to attract renowned civil and democratically oriented intellectuals to their ranks. Ivan Ribar, PhD, was the only one from Čkrebčić’s list who managed, after a period of illegal stay in Belgrade, to leave for Zagreb in summer 1942, from where he went to Bosnia and joined the partisans; Siniša Stanković, who was imprisoned in the Banjica camp throughout the war, but managed to run away and hide in Belgrade until liberation, was a member of the Main People’s Liberation Committee for Serbia (Bihalji-Merin et al, 1978: 300-301); Dragoljub Jovanović invited the followers of his People’s Peasant Party to join partisans, yet he did not become a partisan himself, but collaborated with them from occupied Belgrade, where he illegally spent the whole war. He rejected the offer to join the *chetnik* movement of Draža Mihailović; despite obviously knowing that he was the subject of investigation by both the Germans and their collaborationists, Đorđe Tasić stayed in Belgrade²² and met his tragic death by shooting in 1943. It might be a coincidence, but the time of the foundation of the Main People’s Liberation Committee for Serbia²³ (November 1941) coincides with the time when Tasić was taken hostage and sent to the Banjica concentration camp. It could be assumed that the Germans had the information about the partisans’ intention to transfer Tasić and other intellectuals to the free territory, and stopped them from doing it. It is obvious that Tasić did not hide from the occupier at all: until his dismissal, he performed his dean function and teaching duties; he applied for re-election for the Full Professor of the Faculty of Law, lived at his address, despite the fact that he had been taken by the Germans to the Banjica camp and interrogated in the Special Police. Therefore, it was clear to him that he was being followed, but he resorted only to some mimicry-like elements of protection, in the form of signing Jonić’s *Appeal to the Serbian nation* (obviously with reluctance and as one of many), his participation at the meeting of the educational staff qualified as “anti-communist” by the Germans (there are no data that Tasić spoke at the meeting – he only kept the minutes, according to the denunciations: namely, he “verified the minutes” and “was a member of the action committee for the preparation of the resolution” of educational staff in Belgrade, as he personally claimed at the interrogation in the Special Police on 31 December 1941). On the other hand, however, Tasić’s activities at the University of Belgrade at the beginning of the German occupation caused trouble to the collaborationists. He was a member of the Committee established by the Senate of the University with the task of formulating the attitudes of the University of Belgrade about the announced amendments to the Law on Universities prepared by Aćimović’s commissary administration. The Committee prepared a Memorandum that was adopted by the Senate on 5 September 1941 (DAS, G200, Minutes from the sessions of the University Council, book 8) in the preparation of which Tasić played an important role as a jurist (with M. Ilić, also a member of the

²² “I remember as if it had happened yesterday that my father invited him to come to Vranje after the outbreak of WW2. He virtually begged him to come to our place and save his life. He did not want to listen to him”, says Tasić’s relative Milorad Đorđević Bonde (Zdravković Džonov, 2015: 166).

²³ The governing body of Yugoslav partisans in the liberated territories.

Committee). The Memorandum “with brilliant jurist skill, expresses the patriotic resistance to the occupier’s intention to reform the University” (Markičević, 1999: 51). In fact, the Memorandum rejects everything that the Germans wanted to do at the University through Aćimović’s commissary administration: from introducing racist principles to its reorganization and reduction of its autonomy to mere proclamation (see Kandić, 2005: 51-57). Afterwards, until the second time he was arrested (which will be discussed further), “Professor Tasić made no moves or acts that would express his support to the occupation regime and Nedić’s government. We cannot see him in any committee or board of the Faculty of the University; he did not publish a single article in journals or daily newspapers published during the occupation” (Kandić, 2005: 261).

Although, in Lukić’s opinion, Tasić’s theoretical orientation is not Marxist “in narrow terms”, but has certain similarities, a question arises whether he had any connections whatsoever with the Communist Party of Yugoslavia before and during the war. As we have already stated, he was an “Agrarian” belonging to the left wing represented by Dragoljub Jovanović, who openly took the side of the partisan movement at the beginning of the war. Apart from the denunciations, which were denied by Tasić himself during the police interrogations, several ties could be found that could indicate something like that rather than be reliable statements:

- On 20 October 1939, during his mandate as the Dean at the Faculty of Law in Belgrade, he signed a petition for the general amnesty of political prisoners who were mostly communists at the time;
- Just before the outbreak of the war in Yugoslavia, in February 1941, Tasić attended the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the foundation of the Red Army;
- At the beginning of the war, as a member of the Committee appointed by the Senate, he took part in the preparation of the Memorandum of the University of Belgrade, which rejected all occupation reforms of the University;
- According to Dušan Čkrebić’s testimony, the partisans were preparing to transfer a number of influential intellectuals to the free territory, one of whom was also Đorđe Tasić;
- The testimony of Dragoslav Janković, one of the first associates of the *Sociološki pregled / Sociological Review*, Professor at the Faculty of Law and subsequently the Rector of the University of Belgrade, is perhaps the most direct one in that respect: “Late Đorđe Tasić was an extraordinary, outstanding man. I visited him in his home many times during the occupation, usually in the evening, before the curfew, just to take him out for a walk in fresh air. [...] *During our walks we talked about everything and then I realized to what extent he had become close to Marxism, although he was an “Agrarian” – a member of the Agrarian Party. [...] After the war he would definitely have been on our side – with the communists. I am firmly convinced about it*” (Miljković, 1978: 16, italics by U.Š.).

Therefore, from what is known so far, Tasić was clearly not a member of the Communist Party, but the war circumstances brought him increasingly closer to that political option. If he had survived the war, we would have seen whether Janković's predictions would come true, or Tasić would have met a similar fate like his party companion Dragoljub Jovanović²⁴.

WHERE AND WHEN DID GESTAPO EXECUTE PROFESSOR ĐORĐE TASIĆ?

It is interesting that neither the year nor the place of the execution of Professor Đorđe Tasić can be precisely determined. He was definitely executed by Gestapo. Where and when?

According to some, he was executed in Banjica (Simić, 1997: 119; Kandić, 2002b: 95, 101; Kandić, 2005: 262; Dimitrijević, 2003: 28). The Banjica camp as the place and 1944 as the year of execution were accepted by others too (e.g., Antonić, 2015: 267), including the author of this paper (Trkulja, Šuvaković, 2018b). We non-critically took over the data while writing notes about the authors of the papers in the reprint edition of the *Sociološki pregled / Sociological Review No. 1/1938*. Kandić points out that during the war Tasić was arrested twice, and that his second arrest took place in January 1943 (i.e., after his retirement)²⁵ and “stayed in the Banjica camp until the execution in 1944. There are few data about his imprisonment” (Kandić, 2005: 256). However, Kandić does not cite any sources and, as we have already said, Tasić is not in the list of the Banjica camp victims. However, in the Historical Archives of the City of Belgrade there is a report by the State Security Administration (abbreviated UDBA) of 27 January 1959 that actually answers the requested check-up of Đorđe Tasić's whereabouts. That report states that “at the end of 1942 or the beginning of 1943 he was arrested by the Germans and taken to the Banjica camp” (IAB-UGB-1171-1). The problem is that the published list of the Banjica camp victims (Micković, Radojčić, 2009) does not include Đorđe Tasić's name. If Tasić had been imprisoned in the Banjica camp for almost two years, as Kandić claims, there should be some trace about it. His name would have appeared in the list of the Banjica camp victims, someone would have testified about it (just as there are reliable

²⁴ It is known that, after the victory of the socialist revolution in Yugoslavia, Dragoljub Jovanović had a short mandate in the government, but was dismissed from the Faculty of Law, arrested on grounds of “high treason” and sentenced to nine years in prison. His “guilt” was in his advocacy of the civic-parliamentary attitudes which were not in line with the revolutionary moment of the time. He was rehabilitated in 2010. In his conversation with Dušan Čkrebić, the then President of the Republic Executive Council (i.e., the Government) of Serbia recorded in his diary, Petar Stambolić stated the following: “You're a young man, and that's why perhaps you don't know it. We made a terrible mistake regarding Dragoljub” (Čkrebić, 2009: 79). That is why the Council increased Dragoljub Jovanović's financial assistance (up to the maximum amount), since he was not entitled to old-age pension, according to Čkrebić.

²⁵ “He was arrested the second time on 25 August 1943” (Simonović, 1982: 25).

testimonies and data about his imprisonment in the Banjica camp in 1941), and there would be some minutes from the interrogation...

According to others, Tasić was executed by shooting in the Sajmište concentration camp. However, as late as 1984 Lukić mentions that Tasić was arrested and “shot immediately afterwards in the Sajmište concentration camp” (Lukić, 1984/1995: 600)²⁶. Rista Simonović also says that Tasić was executed by shooting “somewhere in Sajmište” (Simonović, 1990: 197). Tasić’s relative from Vranje, Milorad Đorđević Bonde, also thinks that Tasić was executed by shooting “in 1943, supposedly in the Sajmište concentration camp” (Zdravković Džonov, 2015: 166). However, Tasić’s name is not in the list of the victims in the Sajmište concentration camp, available on the website of the Historical Archives of the City of Belgrade. The reason why Đorđe Tasić is not mentioned in the list of those executed by shooting in this particular camp might be revealed through the finding about the existence of the so-called “Fishermen Pavilion”. Writing about the reduced number of the prisoners in the Sajmište camp from 1943 onwards, Milan Koljanin, our historian who committed himself to the study of this camp’s history, says that at that time “from the territory of Serbia only some groups of prisoners were brought from other camps, and then transports were formed for sending them to concentration camps. However, some prisoners were brought individually to the camp... mostly smaller groups of those arrested in police actions... In that period, the Sajmište camp was also on several occasions used by the German police as a place for executing individuals or smaller groups of prisoners. They were brought to the camp and immediately killed in the pavilion (known as the Fishermen Pavilion), which was intended solely for that purpose” (Koljanin, 1992: 333-334). In the conversation with Koljanin, conducted at the time this paper was written, he confirmed the possibility that Tasić could have met his death in the “Fishermen Pavilion”. Koljanin goes on to explain why Tasić’s name is omitted from the list of prisoners in this camp. Therefore, it cannot be determined with absolute certainty where Professor Tasić was killed, but, based on a) his absence from the list of the Banjica camp victims, and b) the absence of any testimony that he spent two years in the Banjica camp (1943 and 1944), which should definitely exist, if not officially, then in the testimonies of the camp survivors, it seems quite sensible that Tasić was not executed by shooting there. The UDBA report points only to the fact that he was taken there, while it was prepared in reply to the search for a missing person, as many as fifteen years after the liberation of Belgrade. There is much more convincing information provided by academician Lukić about the

²⁶ Lukić presented this information in his study “Đorđe Tasić”, written as a preface to *Selection of discussions and articles from the theory of law by Đorđe Tasić*, prepared by Lukić and published by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in 1984. On the occasion of the publication of the Collected works of academician Lukić, he personally insisted that the book *History of Political and Law Theories* should also be supplemented with his ten-odd papers referring to foreign and Serbian theoreticians from the 18th to the 20th century (from Hegel, over Kelsen and Duguit, Jovan Sterija Popović, to Đorđe Tasić and Božidar S. Marković). On that occasion, the study was added about Đorđe Tasić, which presents Lukić’s most complete evaluation of Tasić’s life and work, although multiple times on various occasions and in longer time intervals throughout his career, Lukić returned to Tasić, his contribution to Serbian and European science and the suffering he had encountered.

Sajmište camp as a place of execution, particularly when having in mind the data about the “Fishermen Pavilion”, revealed by our historian Milan Koljanin.

As for the year of Tasić’s execution, as early as 1953, or just eight years after the end of WW2, Radomir Lukić mentioned that Tasić had been “arrested on 25 August 1943 and, according to the received information, executed by Gestapo the following day” (Lukić, 1953: 114). The same dates of Tasić’s arrest and execution are given by both Simonović (Simonović, 1990: 197) and Milovan Mitrović in the book based on his doctoral dissertation, mentored by academician Radomir Lukić (Mitrović, 1982: 125). The date of 26 August 1943 is also mentioned in the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia* (Denković, 1971: 320), while *Prosveta’s Small Encyclopaedia*, in the entry “Tasić, Đorđe”, states 1943 as the year of Tasić’s death (Bihalji-Merin et al, 1978: 358). Given the fact that these encyclopaedias were government projects in the country in which anti-fascism was pursued as an ideology, it is difficult to assume that the authors of the entries did not take particular care when providing the date of Tasić’s execution²⁷. As a matter of fact, the entry about him for the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia* was written by Dragaš Denković, the assistant of Professor Mihailo Ilić (imprisoned and executed in Banjica in 1944) and post-war professor at the Faculty of Law. Denković definitely had reasons to be interested in both Ilić’s and Tasić’s fate, not only because of writing encyclopaedia entries. Many years after Lukić and twenty years after he wrote the entry in the *Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia* with the information about 26 August 1943 as the date of execution, at the 1992 gathering, which was attended by Lukić himself, Professor Denković claimed that Tasić had been arrested and executed on 23 August 1943. (Denković, 1994: 32). The same was written by Radomir Konstantinović in the Notes to the book of memoirs of his father, Professor Mihailo Konstantinović, *Politics of Agreement*, which was published 16 years after his death (R. Konstantinović, 1998: 6). Janičijević gives 27 August 1943 as the date of Tasić’s execution (Janičijević, 1978: 20), without citing any sources or trying to determine the place of execution, just as Mitrović. Simić and Dimitrijević accept 25 August 1943 as the date of Tasić’s arrest, but conclude that the date of his execution is unknown, citing Lukić who says “after the arrest, the following day” (Simić, 1997: 119; Dimitrijević, 2003: 28). Therefore, when speaking of 1943, the arrest and execution dates range from 23 August to 27 August of that year, and this information is provided by the people who knew Tasić and were close to him, primarily Lukić, Denković and Rista Simonović, and even R. Konstantinović, if we assume that he had got the information for his Notes from his father Mihailo. However, it is evident that Lukić cites the “notifications” when disclosing the date of Tasić’s arrest and execution. Moreover, Lukić’s date, the first Denković’s date (from the *Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia*) and Simonović’s date are identical – Tasić was arrested on 25 August and executed by shooting on 26 August. However, a question arises as to the source of Lukić’s “information”. Definitely it was not Rista Simonović since at the time when Lukić published the date of execution (Lukić, 1953: 114) they did not know each other. It is possible that the notification was given to Lukić by Mihailo

²⁷ The Union Bibliographic-Catalogue data base COBIB.SR also gives 1943 as the year of Đorđe Tasić’s death.

Konstantinović, the editor-in-chief of the journal *Annals of the Faculty of Law in Belgrade*, in which Lukić presented the relevant information within *In memoriam* to Đorđe Tasić. Perhaps the source was Dragoslav Janković, a member of the Editorial Board of the *Annals* at the time. It could also have been Ilić's pre-war assistant, Dragaš Denković, who must have made inquiries into the fate of his professor who had been imprisoned in the Banjica camp and executed there in 1944. While doing so, he could have learnt something about Đorđe Tasić as well, since Lukić had been Tasić's assistant before WW2 (Mitrović, 2015: 234). Lukić definitely knew Professor Antonije Tasić, Đorđe's brother, who was the Professor at the School of Economics and Commerce, which was merged with the Faculty of Law during WW2 and from which the Faculty of Economics was founded after the war. He could also be the source of this information, having in mind that he had spoken to Rista Simonović – who, as a chronicler of Vranje and a friend of the Tasić brothers – recorded the testimony about Antonije trying to save his brother Đorđe: “The second time, based on the report of his fellow citizens, he was arrested on 25 August 1943. His brother, Antonije Tasić, visited the Head of Gestapo in Serbia, Emanuel Schäfer, PhD of law from Vienna (in Carnegie's Street, today's the Archives of Serbia). He showed him the yearbook of the Collection of Works of the Faculty of Law in Heidelberg on the occasion of six centuries of its foundation. The introductory part of the Collection contained a text by Đorđe Tasić. Schäfer, PhD, the Head of Gestapo, was familiar with it. He briefly answered: *Too late! All of you here are communists*. He was executed the following day with many other patriots” (Simonović, 2021: 358)²⁸.

According to our research results, Professor Ljubica Kandić is the one who claims that Tasić was not executed until 1944 (Kandić, 2005: 256), the year that was carelessly accepted later on. She does not provide any source for such information about the year of Tasić's execution and does not give any approximate date of execution, and, furthermore, neither Simić²⁹ nor she provides sources proving that it took place in Banjica. The above-mentioned UDBA report, which contains the information about Tasić's arrest and imprisonment in Banjica at the end of 1942 or the beginning of 1943, also states the following: “*After a while, when his wife brought him a package* (italics by U.Š.), the camp authorities refused to take the package, saying that Tasić did not need anything and had everything he wanted. She was not directly told that he had been shot or what had happened to him. In fact, there is nothing known about him since then” (IAB-UGB-1171-1). If we read this statement carefully, the use of the formulation “after a while” is rather indefinite. However, his wife would certainly not have waited two years before taking a package to him, but would have done it immediately and periodically, which was permitted by the camp authorities. Therefore, “after a while” had to be a shorter period. From this time distance, it is difficult to reconstruct what happened to Tasić from the beginning of 1943, when he was dismissed from the Faculty of Law in Belgrade through

²⁸ Some clergymen did not help either, although Antonije begged them for help, see: S. Simonović (2019: 17).

²⁹ According to our insight into the literature, Simić was the first to label the Banjica camp as a place of execution, but he specifies the time as August 1943 (Simić, 1997: 119).

his retirement, until 25 August 1943, when, according to Lukić, Tasić was arrested by Gestapo. There may be different assumptions. However, if Tasić had been imprisoned in the Banjica camp for two years, there would have been some testimony about it. As we have already said, Dragoslav Janković testified about visiting Tasić's home "many times during the occupation, usually in the evening, before the curfew, just to take him out for a walk in fresh air" (Miljković, 1978: 16). It is rather debatable to which occupation year he refers. But, since Janković says that he took him out for a walk, it should refer to the period of a sort of exile or semi-illegal life. Having in mind that Tasić applied for the teaching post at the University during 1942 (which means that he was not hiding), that at the end of 1942 he asked for an administrative ban to be imposed on part of his earnings, that he did not retire as a pensioner until the beginning of 1943 (in the meantime he was "available"), it could be assumed (and disputed, of course) that these walks took place afterwards, during 1943. Moreover, Janković says that Tasić became close to Marxism "at that time", although he was a member of the Agrarian Party. The ideological transformation still takes some time. Janković also speaks about Tasić's "naivete", saying: "Perhaps it was his naivete that cost him life. He believed everyone" (Miljković, 1978: 16).

Taking into account all the above-mentioned, we think that the claim about 1944 as the year of Tasić's execution can be rejected as inaccurate, or at least insufficiently supported by evidence. Namely, a) only eight years after WW2, Lukić precisely stated the dates when Đorđe Tasić had been arrested and executed; b) the year of death is given in two important encyclopaedias, one of which gives 26 August 1943 as the date of Tasić's death, the same date stated by Lukić; c) Rista Simonović, as a friend of Đorđe and Antonije Tasić, gives the same dates as Lukić; d) Denković also mentions 1943 as the year of Tasić's death in his entry about Tasić in the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia* – namely, 26 August 1943, but more than two decades later he changed it into 23 August 1943, which was subsequently mentioned by Radomir Konstantinović, Professor Mihailo Konstantinović's son. We assume that Radomir Konstantinović might have heard something like that from his father, since he mentions it in the Notes to his father's book of memoirs, whereas the book and the Notes to it were published many years after his father's death and several decades after the events, when the memory fades unless written down; and e) Janićijević mentions 1943 as the year of Tasić's death and takes 27 August as the execution date. On the basis of the above, before new data are provided, 26 August 1943, as Professor Radomir Lukić actually stated, can be accepted as the most reliable date of Tasić's death.

TOWARDS A CONCLUSION

The respectable scientist, professor, law expert and sociologist Đorđe Tasić, PhD, is indisputably the victim of fascism. It cannot be denied that he was killed by Gestapo.

What are the reasons for Tasić's execution by shooting? First of all, they lie in Tasić's personality. Having been educated in the citizen spirit, loyal to parliamentary principles and democracy, he was certainly not a revolutionary. It can be accepted that Marxist and

generally socialist ideas had an effect on him, but rather as a humanist orientation, an interest in the working class (particularly the peasantry and the problems of the village, the research of which he organized at the Faculty of Law in Belgrade). At the same time, we should note his coming closer to the Marxist interpretation of the society during WW2, as confirmed by Professor Dragoljub Janković. Although he stayed away from politics, he was a member of the pre-war Agrarian Party, specifically its left wing, led by Dragoljub Jovanović. It was enough for suspecting him of being close to communists since this party was believed to represent legally, at least in some part, the interests of the illegal Communist Party. During his mandate as the Dean of the Faculty of Law in Belgrade, Tasić even signed a request for general amnesty of political prisoners in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, whereas it goes without saying that most of them came from the ranks of communists. The leaders of the Agrarians were also accused of connections with the British intelligence service (Nenezic directly claims Tasić had such connections, without citing any sources, whereas Kosić makes this claim regarding Miloš Tupanjin, PhD, and some unnamed members of the Agrarians, once again without citing any data sources). In fact, the British intelligence service (even in more recent Serbian historiography)³⁰ is claimed to have organized the coup on 27 March 1941. This party also had its representatives in Simović's government (Branko Čubrilović), while one of its leaders, Milan Gavrilović (who was certainly close to the British), served as the Yugoslav ambassador to Moscow. As an expert, Tasić also participated in reaching the agreement Cvetković-Maček, which is related to the masonic influence (Tasić himself was first arrested in 1941 and taken to the Banjica camp within the action called "Mason", although the information about his masonry, as we have shown, is debatable). In fact, the nazis labelled masons,

³⁰ It is interesting to note complete lack of understanding of the historical course by some Serbian researchers from the field of social studies and humanities. Without denying that foreign services, including the British one, wanted to pull the Kingdom of Yugoslavia into the war, the decision to reject the Tripartite Pact was definitely an expression of profound wishes and attitudes of the people *en masse*, who showed it by going out to the streets and cheering in support of that decision. It was the authentic feeling, at least of the Serbian people, in the first Yugoslav state. The people were against Nazis and fascists. World War One and Serbian casualties had not been forgotten. The events from March 1941 were objectively to the benefit of Great Britain and the Soviet Union – Germany postponed attacking the Soviet Union by six weeks in order to attack Yugoslavia first, which seriously affected Hitler's army. In the same way, the accusations that can be heard in 2023 about "Slobodan Milošević giving Serbian blood in 1999 in order to save Russia" are nothing but a notorious lie, intended to clear the NATO of the guilt for having attack the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and to label the decisions about defending the country as "antinational", while we can agree with the claim that the objective "importance of Serbia (although it was assaulted by almost all the countries and organizations) lies in the fact that it postponed by fifteen years the realization of the idea of global management from a single centre so that the humanity could find instruments for opposing this evil. [...] The indicator of the level of maturity of modern civilization, but also the level of Russia's awareness when it comes to its national interests depend exactly on the manner of resolving the Balkan issues" (Guskova, 2014: 410). Therefore, the Serbian nation should not denounce its freedom-oriented traditions and should always defend its country in case it is threatened, and should never be the oppressor. Claiming that others are responsible for our (historically proper and moral) choices that, naturally, implied sacrifice as well, reduces the real historical role of the Serbian people at the crucial moments of world history.

together with Jews, Roma and communists, as their main enemies. Not delving into the (in)existence of all these ties ascribed to Tasić (communists, the Soviet Union, masons, the British intelligence service), their common denominator at that time was – anti-fascism. At the pre-war sessions of the Senate of the University of Belgrade, Tasić stood up for the students who were accused of being communists, stating that it was the teachers' task to educate youth and, in case there was any guilt, it should be decided about by a court of law. He was against the USSR pact with Germany, knowing that Hitler would break his word, while at the same time being aware that there was no compromise with fascism. That is why he had a dispute with the students-communists who justified this agreement within the politics of the Comintern. This dispute was motivated exactly by Tasić's anti-fascism. On the eve of WW2 in Yugoslavia, in February 1941, Tasić expressed his attitude towards the USSR by attending the 20th anniversary of the foundation of the Red Army and by participating in the foundation of the Association of the Friends of the Soviet Union, at the proposal of Ivan Ribar, PhD.

Tasić was doubtless not a man who would “go for the barricades”. His resistance was composed, intellectual, but also practical. He was definitely an opponent of totalitarianism and fascism as its most brutal form. He opposed it best as he could – in an intellectual manner. In 1941, while he could still do it as the Dean of the Faculty of Law, Tasić strongly resisted the intention of the Nazis and collaborationists to reorganize the University of Belgrade on racist foundations and to put it into the service of the occupation regime. The result of his resistance is the Memorandum of the Senate of the University of Belgrade from September of the same year. The Quislings did not acquire the professors' approval for introducing Nazi regulations at the University, and Tasić significantly contributed to the legal argumentation of that disapproval. There is information that the partisans intended to transfer him to the free territory in 1941, together with other renowned civil intellectuals, but it did not happen. Perhaps he did not want it, just as he did not want to return to his hometown Vranje and spend the occupation period there. In any case, the time when the partisans intended to do it coincides with Tasić's arrest by the Germans and his being held hostage in the Banjica camp.

Tasić's overall attitude towards Nazism and Fascism, even before the outbreak of WW2 in Yugoslavia, as well as during the war, fully entitles us to make a conclusion about his anti-fascist, free-spirited orientation. This has already been emphasized by other authors (Denković, 1971; Golenkova, 1984/2022: 35; Lukić, 1984/1995). Tasić's anti-fascism, openly expressed not only in theory, but also in practice, was the very cause for his execution in the Sajmište camp on 26 August 1943.

SOURCES [In Serbian]:

Archives of Yugoslavia (AJ), fond 100 Masonic lodges in Yugoslavia, f. 15, 16, 17, 18.

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Historical Archives of Belgrade, IAB-UGB-1171-1

Historical Archives of Belgrade, IAB-UGB-SP-IV-11-66-k.194-25

Historical Archives of Belgrade, IAB-1177-I-99 Mihailo Ilić

Historical Archives of Belgrade, IAB UGB SP - IV-11/5 i 192/26 Dušan Matić

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Military Archives of Serbia (VA), fund Nda, K 20 A, F 2, D 23

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