

Croatian Latin Writers — an International Nationalist Phenomenon in a Socialist Republic

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Jugoslavenska Enciklopedija treba da ostane skromnim spomenikom naše vlastite civilizacije. (...) Dati pod ždrijelom turskih topova nekoliko stotina imena slikara, književnika, graditelja, stratega i ideologa, i nekoliko stotina latinskih pisaca (od kojih je pedesetak postalo evropskom slavom svoga vremena), nije takva epizoda, te ne bi trebalo da Enciklopedija o njoj ne progovori: ne patetično, ali ponosno. Zaustavit ću se (na trenutak) u nizu problema ove naše Enciklopedije kod slučaja naših latinista, jer nam upravo taj primjer neobično živo govori o složenoj problematici našega posla, koji će iz mnogih razloga imati da bude pionirski. Naši latinisti, taj naš “Globus intellectualis” od četiri stoljeća, ostao je po samoj naravi stvari eksteritorijalan. Historija naše književnosti obuhvatila je od naših latinista samo nekolicinu, i to onu najglasniju, i to tek u tangenti, tek toliko da ih spasi od zaborava, pošto se njima kao nepoznatim strancima nije bavio nitko. A upravo ti naši latinisti obuhvaćaju u svojoj literaturi nekoliko hiljada klasičnih i zapadnoevropskih autora. Oni se, kao ideolozi, stratezi, političari, učenjaci, ekonomski, tehničari, astronomi, pjesnici, kao fanatički historici vlastite nacije i njenih problema, kao filolozi, gramatici, sanjari, diplomati, propagandisti i agenti, ističu u međunarodnim omjerima ne samo veličinom svoga znanja, sposobnosti ili pjesničkog dara, briljantnošću svoje postojanosti i dostojanstvom karaktera, već su nam dragocjen dokaz kako kod nas normalna ljudska pamet nije kapitulirala ni onda, kad nas je sudbina bacila u najmračnije ponore historijskog podzemlja.

The Yugoslav Encyclopedia should remain a modest monument of our unique civilisation. (...) To produce, under muzzles of Turkish cannons, several hundred renowned painters, writers, builders, strategists, and ideologists, and several hundred Latin writers (of which more than fifty enjoyed European-wide fame in their time), this is not an episode that should be glossed over by the Encyclopedia; without any pathos, but not without pride. In enumerating problems of this Encyclopedia of ours, let me linger awhile over the case of our Latin writers, because this example testifies vividly to the complex problematic of our task, which in many aspects has to be a pioneering one. Our Latinists, these four centuries of our “Globus intellectualis”, remained in their very nature extraterritorial. The history of our literature covered just a few of our Latinists, just the loudest few, and just tangentially, just to rescue them from oblivion, since they, as unknown strangers, were not being studied by anyone. And these Latinists of ours include in their writings several thousand classical and West European authors. They are ideologists, strategists, politicians, scholars, economists, technicians, astronomers, poets, they are fanatical historians of their own nation and its problems, they are philologists, grammaticians, dreamers, diplomats, propagandists, and agents; at international level, they stand out not only for the scope of their knowledge, abilities, or poetic gift, for the brilliance of their commitment and dignity of their character; they provide us with an inestimable proof that in our country the common sense of humanity did not capitulate even as the fates sunk us down to the darkest pit of history.

Miroslav Krleža, “O nekim problemima Enciklopedije” [On some problems of the Encyclopedia], *Republika IX* (1953), 2-3, 109–132.