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Reading Spies

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Reading *Spies*, one quickly comes to the conclusion that prostitution is not the oldest trade in the world, that there are trades older and more complex, that there are games with greater and bloodier stakes, and losses more frightening and hopeless.

Spies can be read as a thrilling text about the ever captivating concept of espionage, as a historical novel, as a series of psychological studies, as a collection of short stories in which myth and reality entwine, as a collection of lyrical poems found sporadically therein, or, rather, as one of unintelligible encrypted messages, and whatever the conclusion, no matter the denomination of this prose, you will be mistaken but, still, very close to the truth.

There exist numerous thrillers and novels with thriller elements; however, there are no novels, as far as we know, in this country or the world, in which the history of national thought as concerns survival coincides with the history of espionage as a military, political, and, if you so wish, a scientific discipline. There are novels, like James Fenimore Cooper's *Spies*, in which espionage is depicted, in a shorter time period (the American Civil War) and through the fate of an individual, as part of the national struggle, but there are no novels which explore espionage in the context of the entire history of a country as had been done in Sušić's *Spies*.

To the naked eye invisible are the tears and the blood being shed on a daily basis in regard to spies and espionage. This is not about Orwell's terrifying *1984* in which espionage effectively became public, i.e. became its own antithesis, an absurdity; rather, it is about the hidden struggle for life or death whose real truth can never be known, whose extent, resolution, or ultimate meaning, cannot be frequently grasped by even the actors themselves, even though they constantly stake their only and most valuable possession – their lives.

When he has finished reading *Spies*, and has laid the novel aside, the reader begins to entertain the thought that the history of a country, the history of people, is far from what can be found in textbooks, realizing that books offer but a mere distant gleam and an echo of that which remains hidden in secret compartments, in the archives, or is destroyed right after use, of that which remains unencrypted for all time, or is taken to the grave. Concealed but immeasurable movements, craftiness, circumvention, ferociousness under the guise of nobleness, hypocrisy in the service of genuine belief

and honesty in the service of most abominable hypocrisy, all these are the elements and regulations of espionage wherein there are no means which would not be justified by an ordinarily hidden and unknown objective. Espionage – it is a story about an iceberg only a small part of which is above water; it is the secret but genuine history of every organized human community.

The specific history of Bosnia reflects the specific way of combating the various and numerous spies. The loss of autonomy that Bosnia suffered in the 15th century Sušić sees in her inability to resist foreign spies, primarily the Ragusan and Ottoman ones. The growth of her power in this realm is a necessary consequence of and the impetus for the growth of her notion of national liberation.

...Gradaščević in *Spies* appears to be the first to spread the notion of national liberation among Muslims in Bosnia, and the first whose notion boasts the elements of class liberation and the awareness of the historical necessity of and the need for a common life between the three people in Bosnia. In fact, he appears as the embodiment of all the progressive elements a man in these areas should strive towards. His aptness in resisting the spies here stands as the symbol of the renewal of Bosnian vitality.

Translated by Bojana Vuković

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