

## **Vreme, December 8 2005**

### **“Učenje o bolu” (Lessons about pain)**

Starting with a phrase by professor Maria Todorova, who said that she loves the Balkans without being either proud or ashamed about that, this article stresses that in these four workbooks, one can discover many aspects of historical truth rather than just accepting one version of the past. Until recently, students in the Balkan countries have been taught that their people have always been the victims of their neighbours and victims of history in general, but these books give students and teachers the chance to investigate history in a multi-perspective manner.

In order to attain a good level of historical understanding, one has to reflect on the painful events of the past, so the 60 historians, who created these books, took this into consideration.

For example: In the book about the Balkan Wars, teachers and students can find not only details about the wars in terms of politics, economics and military strategy, but more importantly, accounts about the personal and human side of conflict; death, hunger, grief and hardship. In the book about the Ottoman Empire, alliances that the history books had previously omitted are highlighted, such as accounts of how the Serbs and Bulgarians defeated the Ottomans together-not each country by itself.

Finally, the article informs us that the Serbian Ministry of Education announced that these workbooks are being introduced into schools. This recognition of the value of the books provides validation of the initiative.

### **“Širom otvorene oči” (Eyes wide open)**

#### **(Interview of Professor Dubravka Stojanović)**

Professor Dubravka Stojanović, editor of the Serbian edition, admitted that this project has been a very important experience for her. Until now, the history books of each Balkan country had been filled with praise for their own country and accusations against the others. She regards this approach to history teaching as form of propaganda. Professor Stojanović believes that this project is the essential to efforts to ensure that all of the Balkan countries use history books, which contain all versions and perspectives of the shared past.

### **“Nema više vremena” (There is no more time)**

#### **(Interview of Mr. Costas Carras)**

Mr. Costas Carras is disappointed by the western media, as he believes that it presents an image of Balkan peoples as barbarians. He highlights the hypocrisy of this attitude through pointing out that what the Nazis did was far more barbaric than anything that has ever happened in the Balkans. He also notes that most of the Balkan peoples fought against the fascists during the Second World War.

He stressed the importance of talking openly about the painful parts of history because our children should have an accurate and multiperspective understanding of their past.

Referring to the project, he very characteristically said: «We planted the seed, the tree has not grown yet, but the goats can already eat from its fruits».

## **Danas, November 30 2005**

### **“Autori knjiga 40 istoričara iz 11 zemalja” (Authors of the books 40 historians from 11 countries)**

“It’s impossible to say that only one historical truth exists, but it’s possible for the students to think for themselves after reading the facts and the way the other countries see the specific historical events”.

## **Danas, December 1 2005**

### **“Zajednička istorija iz 11 uglova” (Common history from 11 different points of view)**

“The biggest problem is to find common ground between those who are from the same country but have a different opinion”.

## **Danas, December 3 2005**

### **“Istina iz više uglova” (Truth from many angles)**

The history of the Balkans is currently in crisis and this project can change the way of teaching it. Mrs. Kristina Koulouri, chief editor of the project, said that these workbooks are a positive response to those who believe that the Balkans are synonymous with violence and “bloodshed”.

With each government change in a country, “history” changes too. With these books, all nations have the chance to resist the manipulation of history and history teaching. We can say that the books offer an alternative way of teaching and challenge the stereotypes which have been factors in conflicts. Democracy, reconciliation and tolerance are also being encouraged through the use of these books.

Professor Dubranka Stojanović, publisher of the Serbian edition noted that there is never only one complete truth, but rather many points of view and partial truths. Each country sees the facts differently and formulates its own truth from this. She believes that we should start to regard ourselves as a region with a shared past, rather than just individual nations.

Finally, the Minister of Education in Serbia and Montenegro, Mr. Vuksanović, was very optimistic and said that it would nice if these workbooks could be incorporated into schools as guides to alternative history teaching.

## **Dnevnik, December 1 2005**

### **“Srpsko izdanje istorijske čitanke” (Serbian edition of history books)**

Most of the students in Serbia “hate” history lessons because until now they have had to learn everything by heart. These workbooks, however give them the opportunity to think. These are the first history books that offer information and perspectives solely on the Balkans. The academics who have worked on this project, didn’t try to hide anything. Their goal was to make students think rationally about the past and the present and become more critical thinkers.

## **Glas javnosti, December 1 2005**

### **“Balkanska istorija iz ugla svih zemalja” (Balkan history from the point of view of all of the countries)**

“We came to the conclusion that children who live in Balkans are not very well informed about the history of their area. The authors were very brave and chose four of the most painful subjects”.

“We wanted to show that it is possible to teach history starting from the fact that minorities exist (in Balkans)” declared Mr. Costas Carras.

## **Politika, December 1 2005**

### **“Istorija za nastavinke” (History for teachers)**

“The delegates from the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation stressed that it is impossible to say that there is only one truth but it is possible and necessary at the same time for students to know how each nation regards particular historical events. The author of these workbooks, Kristina Koulouri said that these alternative books cover issues that are part of history programmes in schools throughout the Balkans. She also reminded us that these books are an effort to integrate Balkan history into European history”.

## **Vecernje Novosti, December 1 2005**

### **“Čitanke za nastavinke” (Books for teachers)**

“From February, all teachers in the country will take part into a training programme, in order to learn how to use these textbooks in their work”.

## **Start, December 1 2005**

### **“Udžbenici istorije kao noćna mora” (History books like nightmare)**

“The Minister of Education judged that history helps to understand and overcome the horrors of the present, because the good days that we have dreamed of and the days we would wish for ourselves and for our children have not yet arrived”.

## **Herodot, spring 2005 edition**

### **“Čarobna reč nove nastave istorije” (The magical word for new history teaching method)**

“The goal of these workbooks is to “soften” the borders between the Balkan countries, “soften” communication between neighbours, but mostly “soften” relationships among countries in conflicts”.

“The books helped us eliminate stereotypes”.