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Ivo Andrić

**BOSNIAN
CHRONICLE**

or

The Days of the Consuls

Translated from the Serbo-Croat

by Celia Hawkesworth

in collaboration with

Bogdan Rakić



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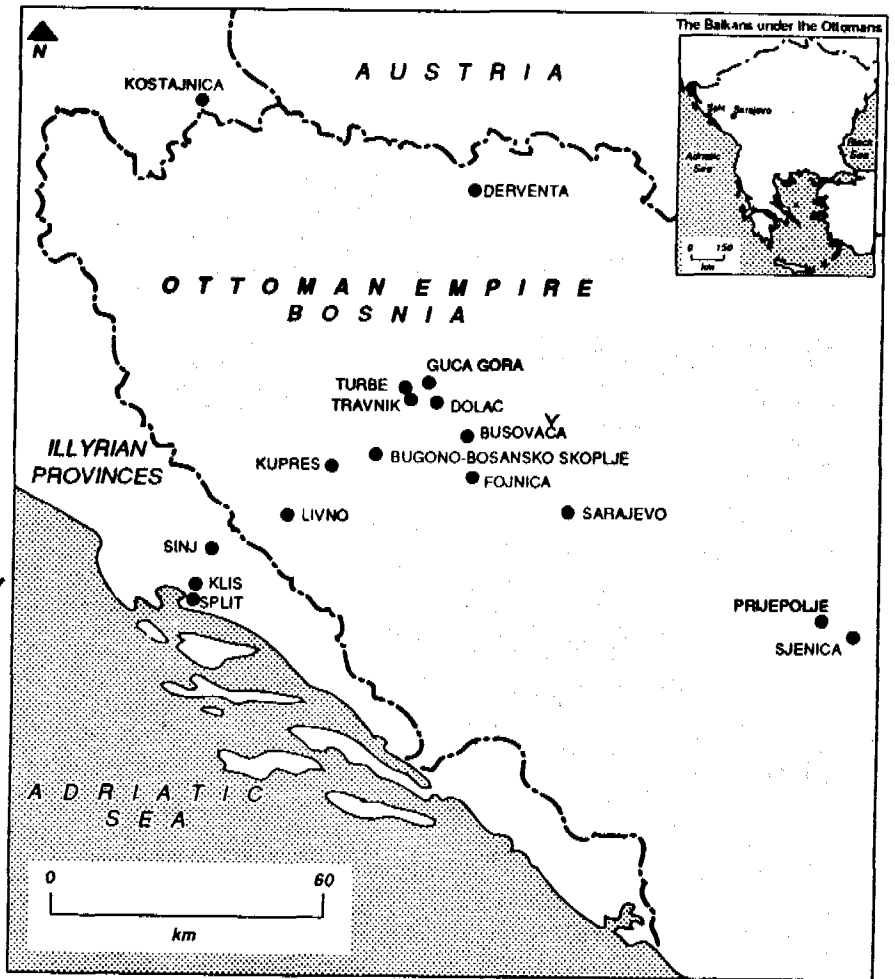
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For Bogdan, Svetlana and Nikola the Third



TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

The final version of this translation was completed in collaboration with Bogdan Rakić in his flat in Sarajevo, in April 1986. Andrić is notoriously difficult to translate: his distinctive rhythms cannot be reproduced easily in English. All consequent awkwardness in wording and structure is my responsibility. But I can at least feel confident that the translation is accurate in respect of its meaning, with all its nuances: Bogdan has an acute ear for both English and his native Serbo-Croat and he proved to be an exceptionally conscientious and demanding colleague. Those spring days in Sarajevo are for me the brightest in a series of happy associations with the land and people of Bosnia. I shall always cherish the memory of our working sessions round a table laden with dictionaries in which we frequently found that illustrations for rarely used words were taken from Andrić himself. Working painstakingly like that through what is at first sight a sombre text, we surprised ourselves by the frequency with which we laughed at the scenes and situations it evoked. The hall-mark of Andrić's style is just this clear-sighted, un sentimental irony.

Andrić's novel was written amidst the misery and tragedy of the Second World War. This translation is being prepared for publication as Sarajevo is racked once again by senseless violence. Nothing can reduce the pain of the knowledge of that grief, suffering and destruction, but Andrić's timeless wisdom can offer a counterweight of sustaining strength.

C. H.
July 1992

PROLOGUE

For as long as anyone can remember, the little café known as "Lutvo's" has stood at the far end of the Travnik bazaar, below the shady, clamorous source of the "Rushing Brook". Not even the oldest people can remember Lutvo, its first proprietor. He has lain for at least a hundred years in one of the cemeteries scattered throughout Travnik, but everyone goes to Lutvo's for coffee and his name is still recalled and mentioned while so many sultans, viziers and beys have been long forgotten. In the garden of this little café, at the foot of a hill, a gentle secluded slope rises up against a cliff, in the shade of an old lime tree. Low benches of irregular shapes have been fitted together around the tree, among boulders and tufts of grass, making a place where it is pleasant to sit for a while and always hard to leave. The benches are weather-worn and warped by the years and long use - they have merged completely with the tree, earth and rock around them.

During the summer months, from the beginning of May to the end of October, this was by ancient tradition the place where the Travnik beys and other notables admitted to their company gathered, about the time of the afternoon prayer. At that time of day, none of the other townspeople would presume to sit and drink coffee here. The spot was known as "The Sofa". For generations this word had a clear social and political meaning in the popular speech of Travnik, because whatever was said, discussed and decided "on the Sofa" had almost the weight of a resolution of the counsellors at the Vizier's Divan.

On the last Friday of October 1806, some dozen beys were sitting there, although the sky was already overcast and a wind was getting up, which always meant rain at this time of year. Each in his own set place, the beys were talking in low voices. Most of them were pensively watching the play of sun and clouds, smoking chibouks and coughing tetchily. They were discussing an important piece of news.

One of them, a certain Suleiman Bey Ajvaz, had recently travelled to Livno on business. While there he had met a man from Split, a reliable person, he said, who had told him the news he was now recounting to the others. They could not make it out and kept asking for details and making him repeat what he had already said.

"It was like this," Suleiman Bey explained. "The man simply asked me: 'Are you expecting visitors in Travnik?' 'Us?' I said. 'No, we don't want visitors.' 'That may be, but you'd better be ready for them,' he said, 'because you're getting a French consul. Bunaparta has asked at the Porte in Istanbul for permission to send a consul, to open a consulate in Travnik. And it's already been approved. You can expect the consul this coming winter.' I treated it as a joke: 'We've lived for hundreds of years without consuls, and that's how we'll go on. In any case, what would a consul do in Travnik?' But he persisted. 'Never mind how you lived in the past, now you're going to have to live with a consul. That's how things are. And the consul will find things to do. He'll sit beside the Vizier giving orders, watching how the beys and agas behave and what the Christians are up to, and keeping Bunaparta informed about it all.' 'There's never been anything of the kind; it couldn't happen,' I contradicted the foreigner. 'We've never had anyone meddling in our affairs and we won't let them start now.' 'Ah well, you see what you can do,' he said, 'but you'll have to accept the consul, because no one has ever refused what Bunaparta asked, and the Istanbul Government isn't going to. Far from it, as soon as Austria sees you've got a French consul, they'll ask you to take one of theirs as well, and then Russia will come along . . .' 'Now you're really going too far, my good fellow!' I stopped him, but he just smiled, the Latin bastard, tugged at his moustache, and said: 'You can cut this off, if things don't turn out just as I say, or very like it.' There, that's what I heard, my friends," said Ajvaz, concluding his story, "and I can't get it out of my head."

Given the circumstances – the French army had already been in Dalmatia for a year and Serbia was in a state of constant rebellion – a vague rumour like this was enough to upset and confuse the beys, who were already very worried. They brooded and fretted over what they had heard, although no one would have known it from their faces and their tranquil smoking. Speaking slowly and

indecisively, in turn, they tried to guess what it could all mean, weighing up how much of it was a lie and what might be true, wondering what they should do to find out more about the matter and perhaps put a stop to it at the outset.

Some of them thought the whole thing had been made up or exaggerated to alarm them. Others commented, with some bitterness, that it was a sign of the times: there were such goings-on now in Istanbul, in Bosnia and the whole world, that nothing should surprise anyone and you had to be prepared for anything. Yet others consoled themselves by saying that this was Travnik – Travnik! – and not just any little provincial town, and that what happened to others need not, could not, happen here.

Everyone said something, just for the sake of speaking, but no one said anything very definite, because they were all waiting to hear what the oldest among them would have to say. This was Hamdi Bey Teskeredžić, a heavily built old man, whose movements were slow but whose gigantic body was still strong. He had fought in several wars, been wounded and captured. He had fathered eleven sons and eight daughters and had innumerable descendants. His beard and moustache were sparse and the whole of his sharp, regular face was sunburnt, covered with scars and blue marks from an old gunpowder explosion. He had heavy, drooping eyelids the colour of lead. His speech was slow but clear.

At last, Hamdi Bey put an end to the conjecture, foreboding and fear by saying, in his surprisingly youthful voice: "Come now, there's no sense trying to cross our bridges before we come to them, as the saying goes, or alarming people for no reason. You must listen and pay attention to everything, but you needn't believe every word straight away. Who knows what will happen with these consuls? Maybe they'll come and maybe they won't. And even if they do, the Lašva won't start flowing backwards: it'll keep on going the same old way. We're on our own ground here, and anyone else who comes is a stranger and won't be able to hold out for long. Many people have come here intending to stay, but so far we've seen the back of all of them. It'll be the same with the consuls if they do come. And there's not even any sign of them yet. That fellow may well have sent a request to Istanbul, but that doesn't mean it's decided. A lot of people ask for a lot of things, but you don't always get what you ask for . . ."

Hamdi Bey uttered these last words angrily then paused, and, in the complete silence, exhaled the smoke from his pipe before continuing: "And if it does happen! We shall have to see how it turns out and how long it lasts. No man's star shines forever, and it won't be any different with that . . . that . . ."

Here Hamdi Bey started to cough, choking with suppressed anger, and so he never did pronounce the name of "Bunaparta" which was in everyone's thoughts and on everyone's lips.

No one else said anything, and that was how the discussion of the latest news was concluded.

Soon the clouds completely covered the sun and there was a strong, cold gust of wind. The leaves on the poplars by the water's edge rustled with a metallic sound. The icy tremor passing through the whole valley of Travnik was a sign that for this year the meetings and conversations on the Sofa had come to an end. One by one the beys began to rise and disperse to their homes with a silent gesture of farewell.

NOTE ON THE PRONUNCIATION OF SERBO-CROATIAN NAMES

With the exception of some Turkish words and names Serbo-Croatian spellings have been retained. The language may be written in either the Cyrillic or the Latin alphabet. The Latin alphabet includes a number of unfamiliar letters listed below. Serbo-Croat is strictly phonetic, with one letter representing one sound. The stress normally falls on the first syllable.

C, c - *ts*, as in *cats*

Č, č - *ch*, as in *church*

Ć, ć - *tj*, close to *č* but softer i.e. *t* in *future*

Dž, dž - *j*, as in *just*

Đ, đ - *dj*, close to *dž* but softer i.e. *d* in *verdure*

Ž, ž - *y*, as in *yellow* (*Yugoslavija*)

Š, š - *sh*, as in *ship*

Ž, ž - *zh*, as *s* in *treasure*

NB For a glossary of Turkish words used in the text, see page 433

EPILOGUE

It was already the third week that the weather had been settled. As every year, the beys had begun to come out to talk together on the Sofa at Lutvo's. But their conversations were restrained and sombre. A silent agreement to rebel against the intolerable government of Ali Pasha was being reached throughout the whole country. This matter had been quite decided in people's hearts and now it was maturing of its own accord. Ali Pasha himself speeded up this maturing process by his actions.

It was the last Friday of May, 1814. All the beys were present and the discussion was lively and serious. They had all heard the news of the defeats of Napoleon's armies and his abdication; now they were simply exchanging, comparing and extending their information. One of the beys, who had been speaking with people from the Residence that morning, said that everything was arranged for the departure of the French Consul and his family, and it was known for certain that the Austrian Consul would soon be following him, since he was in Travnik solely on account of the French. So it could be safely estimated that by the autumn the Consuls and Consulates and all that they had brought with them would disappear from Travnik.

They all received this news like the announcement of a victory. For, although over the years they had become to a large extent accustomed to the presence of the foreign Consuls, they were all nevertheless glad that these foreigners were going, with their different and unusual way of life, and their brazen meddling in Bosnian affairs. They were discussing the question of who would take over the "Dubrovnik Khan" where the French Consulate was now, and what would happen to Hafzadć's big house when the Austrian Consul left Travnik too. They were all speaking a little more loudly than usual, so that Hamdi Bey Teskeredžić, who was sitting in his place, would be able to hear what was going on. He had grown very old and decrepit, collapsed into himself like a dilapidated building. His hearing was giving out. He could not

raise his eyelids, which were even heavier now; instead he had to throw his head back if he wanted to see someone better. His lips were blue and they stuck together as he spoke. The old man raised his head and asked the person who had last spoken: "When was it that those . . . consuls came?"

People began to look at one another and make guesses. Some replied that it was six years ago. Some that it was more. After a brief argument and calculation they agreed that the first consul had arrived more than seven years earlier, three days before the Ramadan Bairam.

"Seven years," said Hamdi Bey thoughtfully, drawing out the words, "seven years! And do you remember how much noise and excitement there was because of those consuls and that . . . that . . . Bunaparta? Bunaparta this, and Bunaparta that. He's going to do this, he won't do that . . . The world is too small for him; there's no limit to his power. And our Christian pigs had raised their heads like barren corn. Some were hanging on to the French Consul's coat-tails, others clung to the Austrian, while yet others were waiting for the one from Moscow. Our rayah quite lost their wits. And – it came and it passed The Emperors rose up and they smashed Bunaparta. The consuls will clear out of Travnik. People will refer to them for another year or so. The children will play consuls and khavazes on the river bank, riding on sticks, and then they too will be forgotten as though they had never existed. And everything will be as it always has been, by God's will."

Hamdi Bey stopped, for his breath had given out, and the others said nothing in anticipation of what else the old man might say. And as they smoked they all savoured the good, triumphant silence.

GLOSSARY OF TURKISH WORDS

N.B. As was the common practice in nineteenth-century Bosnia, the words "Turk" and "Turkish" in the text are frequently used to denote Bosnian Muslims, i.e. Slavs converted to Islam.

<i>Aga</i>	Originally an officer, later used to denote a gentleman, landowner
<i>Ayan</i>	Notable, prominent, distinguished person
<i>Bairam</i>	Muslim festival at the end of the Ramadan fast
<i>Bashi-Bazouk</i>	Irregular auxiliary soldier
<i>Bey</i>	High-ranking official in provincial service, administrator of a province
<i>Cadi</i>	Civil judge of Islamic and Ottoman law
<i>Caliph</i>	The chief civil and religious ruler in Muslim countries, successor of Mohammed
<i>Chibouk</i>	Long tobacco-pipe, with long stem and bowl of baked clay
<i>Defterdar</i>	Tax officer, Minister of Finance, Secretary
<i>Dervish</i>	Member of Islamic religious fraternity
<i>Devlet Musahfir</i>	Guest of the state
<i>Divan</i>	Council, chamber where council meets
<i>Effendi</i>	Title of respect, used initially for government officials and members of learned professions
<i>Emin</i>	Commissioner
<i>Feredjee</i>	Women's ankle-length coat worn outside the house
<i>Giaour</i>	Turkish derogatory name for non-Muslim; infidel
<i>Hafiz</i>	Honourable title, earned by one who knows the Koran by heart
<i>Hamam</i>	Steam bath
<i>Hodja</i>	Muslim man of religion; teacher
<i>"Inshallah"</i>	"With God's help"
<i>Kapidji Bashi</i>	Head of guards

<i>Katil-Ferman</i>	Death warrant
<i>Kaymakam</i>	Deputy for the Vizier in his absence
<i>Khan</i>	Caravanserai, inn, lodging place, warehouse
<i>Khavaz</i>	Courier, bodyguard
<i>Mahal</i>	District, quarter of a town
<i>Mameluke</i>	Member of a body of warriors, originally brought to Egypt as slaves to act as bodyguard for the caliphs
<i>Medrese</i>	Islamic university, theological school
<i>Merhaba</i>	"Good day"
<i>Mubassir</i>	Envoy, agent bearing orders
<i>Muderris</i>	High-ranking teacher in Islamic college, medrese
<i>Muezzin</i>	One who proclaims the hour of prayer from the minaret or highest point of a mosque
<i>Mullah</i>	Ottoman specialist in theology and Islamic law
<i>Muteselim</i>	Lieutenant-governor in a province, in charge of local tax-collection
<i>Pasha</i>	The highest civilian and military rank under the Turkish Sultan (higher than Bey or Effendi)
<i>Pashalik</i>	Area administered by Pasha
<i>Porte</i>	Ottoman court at Constantinople
<i>Rahmet</i>	"Peace to his soul"
<i>Ramadan</i>	Ninth month of Muslim year, rigidly observed as 30 days' fast during the hours of daylight
<i>Rayah</i>	Tax-paying subjects of the Ottoman Government – in Bosnia used to denote the non-Muslim subject-people
<i>Seraglio</i>	Harem
<i>Shalwars</i>	Wide oriental trousers (worn by men and women)
<i>Sherbet</i>	Drink of water, sweetened with sugar or honey
<i>Softa</i>	Student in Islamic university
<i>Spahi</i>	Trained auxiliary member of the Turkish cavalry, usually a landowner whose duty was

	to serve on horseback
<i>Sultan</i>	One of the titles of the ruler of the Ottoman Empire
<i>Surah</i>	A prayer for the dead
<i>Tekke</i>	Monastery belonging to a Dervish order, or Islamic fraternity
<i>Ulema</i>	Doctors of Islamic sacred law
<i>Vizier</i>	High administrative official
<i>Yamak</i>	Officer of the provincial infantry

(I am grateful to Bogdan Rakić, Dr Margaret Bainbridge of SOAS, and Dr Leslie Collins of SSEES for their help in the preparation of this glossary. C. H.)

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