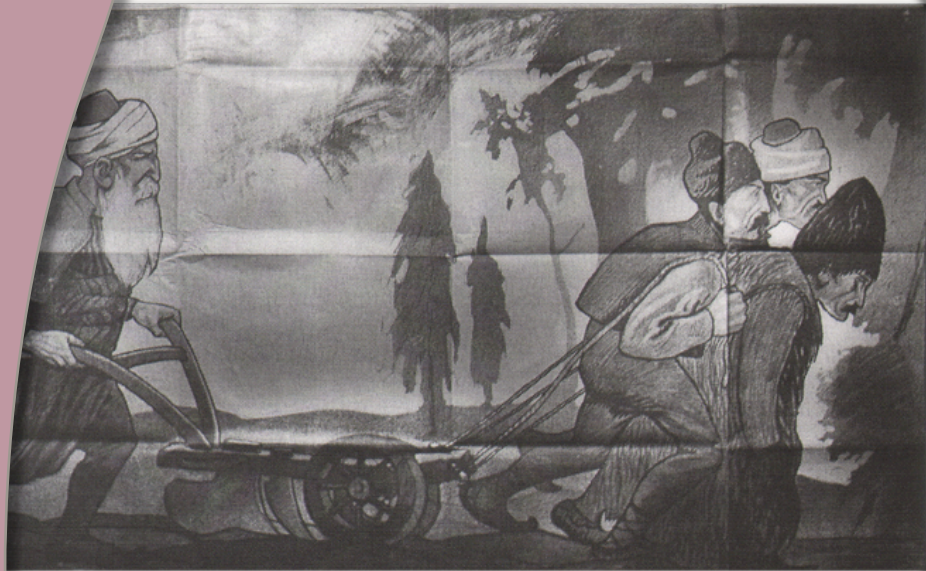


Edin Radušić
Bahrudin Beširević

Apple of discord

The agrarian question - political and social
life in Bosnia and Herzegovina under
Austro - Hungarian rule





Key question

- Was the “agrarian question” a political or economic question?
- How did the “agrarian question” contribute to the divisions of the society and emigration?

Topic

It is about agrarian question in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Yugoslavia). It covers period from the end of 19th century to the 1920s. The importance of this topic comes from the fact that agrarian question was one of the most important questions in the process of change of the Ottoman (Muslim) rule by Austrian and Serbian (Christian) rule. At the end of the Ottoman rule the majority of landowners were Slavic Muslims and Majority of peasants were Slavic Christians. Transferring land property from Muslim landlords to Christian peasants was one of the basic point of Serb national movement during the creation of the Serbian national state in the 19th century and creation of Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Yugoslavia). Every change of land property was understood by Muslims as direct attack to Slavic Muslim community or even to its religion. Finally, the agrarian question was some kind of paradigm of relations between Muslims and Orthodox Christians in the Balkans and between Muslim state and Christian state. Nowadays, the taking of land from Slavic Muslims and giving it to Christians was seen as an act of justice (on Serbian side) or as an act of injustice (on Bosniak Muslim side).



Aims

The student will get information about the agrarian question in B&H and its influence on life of people



Learning outcomes:

- The students will learn about the significance and essence of agrarian issue in BaH;
- Students will compare the positions of different national groups in relation to proposed solutions to agrarian question
- Students will analyze the interconnection between agrarian and national question;



Teaching guideline

The teacher gives instructions to the students and divides them into four equal groups. Each group receives maps, a chart and documents which correlate with their task. Purpose of maps is to help students to understand position of B&H and position of Bosnian religious groups in the Monarchy.

Students read and analyze textual and other historical sources following the key question and the questions which refer to their concrete task. A result of their activity should be written down as bullet-points which will be presented by one or two representatives of each group. Group 1 presents position of the Austro-Hungarian government, Group 2 presents position of the Serb side, Group 3 presents position of the Bosniak/Muslim side, and group 4 presents position of Serbia/Yugoslavia and standpoints of landlords and peasants after the WWI.

After that, all pupils analyze presented arguments and try to answer the key question: *Was “agrarian question” political or economic question? Did “agrarian question” contribute to divisions of the Bosnian society and migration of population from the country, and how?*



90
minutes

Time orientation:

1st step: the teacher gives instruction for the activity, introduces the students with the key question and the historical context of the workshop, divides them into four groups, gives them sources for work, explains to each group their concrete task

2nd step: analyzing the sources, discussion within the group and drawing the conclusions

3rd step: short introduction on the analyzed historical sources and presentations of the conclusion by one or two representatives of each group

4th step: Final discussion through the prism of the key question. The discussion is focused on attitudes and arguments of the four sides. They indicate on similar or different elements in the argumentation

Introduction

The agrarian question in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Austrian rule was the burning issue of the overall social life. Besides Aga (Muslim nobleman) and serf, it included representatives of Austrian rule, local political and religious organizations. During the Austrian rule there were over 100.000 serf families. A vast majority of land owners were Muslims (Bosniaks), while a vast majority of land workers (serfs) were Christians, particularly the Serbs. In the areas Serbia took over in 1878 and after the Balkan wars, as well as after the creating of the Kingdom of SHS, there was a radical solution of the agrarian question and change in the ownership of land.

Source 1

Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Balkans after 1878.



<http://angusyoung111.wordpress.com/2012/07/19/bosnjaci-u-crnoj-gori/> (downloaded on 6 April 2013)

Source 2

Religious structure of land owners with serfs in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1910.

| Total number of land owners with serfs | Total | Muslims | Other |
|--|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| | 10.463 (100%) | 9.537 (91,15%) | 926 (8,85%) |

Die Ergebnisse der Volkszählung in Bosnien und der Hercegovina vom 10. Oktober 1910, Sarajevo 1912.

Group 1

Questions to understand position of the Austro-Hungarian government:

1. How did the Austro-Hungarian government understand the agrarian question and what solutions did it suggest?
2. What were the arguments for these solutions?
3. Is it possible to find in the sources if the agrarian question caused a migration, and if yes, to what extent?
4. How did the Austro-Hungarian policy to foster loyalty of its subjects influence Austro-Hungarian agrarian policy?

Source 1

Promise of Austro-Hungarian authorities to solve the agrarian question

"One of the main arguments of the Foreign Minister of Austro-Hungarian state, Andrassy, for getting the mandate of his country over BaH on Berlin congress was the unresolved agrarian issue, which, in his opinion, the falling Ottoman empire was not capable of solving, so he recommended his country as a strong and non-biased side, able to make order in that restless Ottoman province".

F. Hauptmann, *Privreda i društvo u BiH, Sarajevo 1987*, str. 139

Source 2

Austro-Hungarian authorities on agrarian issue in assembly discussions in 1911.

"The agrarian question during the occupation did not exist in the form of by-off by the serfs (transfer of land to peasants), but in creating the legal certainty between a serf and Aga (the land owner). The Government may, therefore, with clear conscience confirm that agrarian question was precisely studied, it began to solve it in a careful and non-biased manner, and soon brought it to a successful solution."

Ekspoze civilnog adlatusa barona Benka od 3. aprila 1911, *BHS, I/1910-11, III, LXXXVI sjednica*, str. 1916)

Source 3

Announcement of gradual solving of agrarian issue

"Nothing shall be changed by force, without a mature judgment on what you need. Old laws shall apply until new ones are brought".

Proklamacija cara Franje Josipa upućenoj stanovništvu BiH 1878, Sarajevski list

Source 4

Government's proposed legislation to solve the agrarian issue

Paragraph 1: "Serf abandoned land in Bosnia and Herzegovina may only be bought off through a common agreement between a land owner and a serf."

Vladin Zakonski prijedlog o davanju zajmova za dobrovoljno otkupljivanje kmetovskih selišta u Bosni i Hercegovini, Glasnik zakona i naredaba za Bosnu i Hercegovinu, godina 1911., Sarajevo 1911, str. 177

Source 5

The British Consul on agrarian issue and wishes of peasants

"The peasants do not want to work the land for their Beys and Agas, in their ignorance they believe the consequence of their action will be change of ownership. ... The authorities' reaction to such actions of peasants was a Warning stating that those peasants who refuse to work on the land and fulfill their obligations towards the owners would be punished. ... The Austrian authorities tried to strengthen the trust by equal treatment of Christians and Muslims, but their measures do not satisfy the Christians. They believe it is just not to pay anything to the land owners."

FO 195/1212, Freeman-Layardu, Bosna Serai, 19th February 1879, no. 8; FO 195/1212, Freeman-Layardu, Bosna Serai, 3rd December 1879, no. 43

Source 6

The position of Austro-Hungarian authorities on changes in land ownership

"It could be noticed in the past, the attitude of Austro-Hungarian, not to allow transfer of land into the Serb ownership and their strengthening in that field. ... It was emphasized that such a change would be politically undesired, probably due to increased influence of Serbia and unreliability of Serb ethnic element. The goal of authorities was transfer of land into the Austrian hands, where Bank of Austria would play a significant role with the sum of 10,000.000 Crown. The purchased land would be given to the disposal of Austrian colonists."

Edin Radušić, Agrarno pitanje u bosanskohercegovačkom Saboru, magistarski rad, str. 77

Group 2

Questions to understand position of the Serb side:

1. How the Serb side understood the agrarian question and what solution they suggested?
2. What are the arguments for such solution?
3. Is it possible to find in the sources: did the agrarian question influence a migration of the time, and if yes, to what extent?
4. How the Austro-Hungarian agrarian policy influenced loyalty or disloyalty of Serbs?

Source 1

Serb peasants on agrarian question and connecting agrarian question with the issue of loyalty to the state

"The population of Nevesinje area considers itself a traditional owner of the land it farms, and they state about it – 'It is my grandfather's land, the Turks took it by force. The Ottoman authorities took our land by force and gave it to their land Lords (Aga). ... as long as we are on our land and free, we can be useful to ourselves and the Government. Every Aga is our enemy and whoever is protecting them is oppressing us'".

Izveštaj kotarskog predstojnika Lorenca Matića iz Nevesinja 1880, Prema H. Kapidžić, Iseljavanje srpskog seljaštva iz Hercegovine 1902., GDIBiH

Source 3

Serb deputies to BaH Assembly on agrarian and the issue on loyalty to the state

"Due to over-indebtedness, the peasants would, in case of agreed buy-off (an agreement between a land owner and a serf) they would go broke on first bad year. On the other hand, a peasant that would be freed by default (mandatory transfer into the hands of peasants, regardless to the will of land owner) would be useful to the state as well. The state would get loyal subjects, filled with love towards the homeland, who would be foundations of order and legality. ... The number of Bosnian noblemen of Middle Ages who took Islam was not as big as the Muslims claimed, so at the start of the 19th century there were only 48 hereditary Beys in Bosnia. Land owners in the beginning of Ottoman rule were not local people, but foreigners originating from Asia. It was only in the age of anarchy in Ottoman empire that the assimilated foreigners took over all the power in BaH, turning the entire Emperor's land into their own. On the other hand, Serbs in Bosnia had autonomy in the classical period of Ottoman rule, but over the time it was lost, along with title deeds, most often in a forceful way. Even if the Serbs were coming from old Serbia, Montenegro and East Herzegovina, they certainly had more moral right to the land than those coming from Anatolia or other areas of Asia Minor. ... Serb deputies consider agrarian question to be of utmost importance for their people. ... Minister Bilinski was convinced into the necessity of mandatory buy-off by the assumption that around BaH there will be a number of free peasants. The Serb state will go from the (Adriatic) seaside to the Danube, full of free peasants, so when peasants in BaH see that, that they are free in Serbia, it may happen they start moving there."

Sjednice BH Sabora za 1910. i 1911. BHS, I/ 1910/1911., Sarajevo 1911.)

Source 2

An ordinary man about agrarian issue

"A man from Mostar once said 'Do you know, Sir, what good do we have from serfs these days? Take a dish, fill it with oil, and make a small hole on it, so that it drips to the ground. It takes a while for a drop to fall, and the soil absorbs it. When all the oil is gone, there is nothing left in the dish, and on the ground you cannot say where it was dripping. The dish is a serf, and the ground is Aga'."

Srpska riječ, br. 239, 2. (13.) 11. 1910.

Source 4

Moving out of Bosnia and Herzegovina

"During the Austrian rule (1878-1918), it is estimated that 140.000 Muslims left Bosnia and Herzegovina and moved to Turkey*, and some 30.000 to 40.000 Serbs who, in most cases, moved to Serbia... Moving out of peasants from Nevesinje county was broaden with going of first families from Z. Dol and Lukavac to Serbia

...
* Between the Berlin congress 1878 and Balkan wars 1912-1913, the Ottoman Empire, on its further north-west, enclosed a territory of Novi Pazar county, so the border with Austro-Hungary was on the eastern borders of today's Bosnia Herzegovina.

I. Hadžibegović, Moderne migracije, Prilozi IIS, XXII/23; Izveštaj barona Redvica okružnoj oblasti od 16. juna 1902, prema H. Kapidžić, Iseljavanje srpskog seljaštva iz Hercegovine 1902., GDIBiH.)

Source 5

A poet, Aleksa Santic, on exodus of people from Herzegovina

"Oh Serbs, don't allow Vuk's doing
To dirt your face, clean as the Sun!
Brothers, do not abandon your homes,
For martyred land needs martyrs...
It needs men strength and knightly hands,
Needs Obilic and free lions;
It needs your deaths and sufferings,
As there, far, far away, our dawn is sleeping."
"Do you know that glorious place,
Do you know, brother, Nevesinje?
There brothers in jeopardy squeal:
Grim faces, looking down,
Frozen hearts in heroes,
Frozen souls in heroes,
As a strong trouble gripped:
Evil year and evil soldiers,
Wind blowing through empty granaries,
Hunger grins at martyrs,
Puts them in heavy chains,
Breaking the wings to the falcons,
Leaving our land without fliers".

Aleksa Santic, SEŌBA (1902.); ŽNAS'LI, BRATE, NEVESINJE RAVNO? (1903)

Group 3

Questions to understand position of the Bosniak / Muslim side:

1. How the Bosniak/Muslim understood the agrarian question and what solution they suggest?
2. What were the arguments for such solution?
3. Is it possible to find in the sources: did the agrarian question influence a migration of the time, and if yes, to what extent?
4. How the Austrian agrarian policy influenced loyalty or disloyalty of Bosniak/Muslim?

Source 1

A Request of Travnik and Sarajevo Beys addressed to Austrian Emperor, Nov. 1895

"The position of Moslems under the Austrian governing started to weaken in general, and the blame for that is on the authorities, for neither they respect the customs and valid regulations, nor pay attention to human justice. Not protecting the rights of Moslems in agrarian issues initiated the Moslem exodus to Turkey. ... "During the Austrian times (1878-1918), the estimation is, that some 140.000 Moslems left Bosnia and Herzegovina for Turkey, and some 30.000 to 40.000 Serbs who mainly left for Serbia."

Borba Muslimana BiH za vjersku i vakufsko mearifsku autonomiju, Građa, sabrao i uredio: Ferdo Hauptman, Sarajevo 1967. str. 63; I. Hadžibegović, *Moderne migracije*, prilozi IIS, XXII/23)

Source 3

Moslem deputies to the Assembly on agrarian issue

"The Moslems in Bosnia Herzegovina believe that their bare survival is tied to mandatory buy-off by the serfs (obligatory transfer of land to the peasants regardless to the will of the land owner). ... If you (Serbs) would want to work brotherly, ... you would not need to force the issue even if you should be deciding on it. ... Moslem owners are indigenous, and the land of Bosnian Beys and Agas has been their property since the Middle Ages, as recognized by the Ottomans on conquering the Bosnia, when the Bosnian nobles massively converted to Islam. Only the last Ottoman legislation made the owners owners in the full sense of Seriate law... Kings and nobles of Bosnia were Catholic or Pataren, so the people were not orthodox, for the principle in Europe of that time was 'Whose is the land, his is the religion'. The Patarens loved their land so much that they converted to Islam, since it was the only way to keep the land after the Ottoman conquest of Bosnia. Orthodox people in Bosnia are not indigenous, but settlers, mainly from Old Serbia, who moved into Bosnia during the Ottomans due to decrease in number of Moslems, victims of plague and wars. ... So if a serf should become a free peasant, his prosperity is not certain, for free peasants - who are about 50% - are not better off at all. ... Most serfs are not used to manage their land by themselves, some parcels would be cut into smaller due to divisions among co-owners, and they would not be sufficient for feeding their respective families, and in the end, there is a danger that when the land is freely mobile a free peasant becomes a victim of usurers and turns into a man with no land. A serf was protected from all these malaises in the landlord-user relationship thus far."

Sjednice BH Sabora za 1910. i 1911. *BHS, I/1910/1911.*, Sarajevo 1911

Source 2

Moslem newspapers on importance of owning the land

"Moslems, do not abandon the land, for people without land has no future, it is a tree without roots. Organize associations for purchasing the land."

"Musavat", br. 82, 8. X 1910).

Source 4

A poet, Aleksa Santic, on exodus of Bosnia Herzegovina Moslems

"Stay here!... The Sun of foreign sky
Shall not shine on you like here;
Bitter is the bread
Where there is no brother and no own land.
Who can find a better mother from one's own?!
And you mother, land, is this one;
Take a glance around the fields,
There are graveyards of your grandfathers everywhere.
Wormwood flourishes for you abroad;
Everything ties you to this stone and soil:
Name, language, brotherhood, and holy blood,
Stay here!... The Sun of foreign sky
Shall not shine on you like here -
Bitter is the bread
Where there is no brother and no own land..."

Aleksa Šantić, *Ostajte ovdje*

Source 5

Serb ethnographer, Jovan Cvijic, on causes of exodus of Bosniak/Moslem and the problem of land ownership

"It is known that Moslems started to leave Bosnia Herzegovina after the (Austro-Hungarian) occupation; prior to 1908 the moving was very weak; since the Annexing it was intensified. This is a special type of migration. Larger population masses are migrating around Europe today due to economic reasons. The migration of Bosnia Moslems was only to a low degree caused by economic reasons; it was mostly due to psychological factors. ... Nevertheless, the gravest danger of exodus of Bosnia Moslems, for the Serbs and other domestic elements in Bosnia, is that vast land areas will become vacant, and could be populated by foreigners. ... Therefore, it is not enough merely to buy-off the land left by Bosnian Moslems, but its populating by foreigners should be prevented. Serbs, Croats and Slovenians should be populated there. If it cannot be populated with people speaking our language, it should remain internal area for spreading and populating with domestic population in time."

Jovan Cvijić, *O iseljavanju bosanskih muhamedanaca*, "Književni glasnik", 16. juna 1910, Sabrana dela, Knjiga 3 (Tom I): Beograd, 1987.

Group 4

Questions to understand position of the Serbian / Yugoslav Government, landlords and peasants:

1. How the Serbian/Yugoslav government understood the agrarian question and what solution it suggests?
2. What were the arguments for such solution?
3. What was the reaction of the landlords and peasants and their political representatives?

Source 1

PRECEDENTIAL REGULATIONS FOR THE AGRARIAN REFORM

(27 February 1919)

I. Abolition of owner-serf relations

1. Serf relations in BaH, in new areas of Serbia and in Montenegro are abolished, and creation of new such relations is hereby forbidden.
2. The so far serfs are proclaimed free owners of the land they farmed.
3. The so far owners (Agas) shall receive remuneration for the expropriated land, guaranteed by the state. The amount of remuneration and the manner of payment shall be arranged in a separate act. ...

II Abolition of colonist relations

7. The colonist and other serf-like relations between the land owners and farmers in Istria, Gorica, Dalmatia and other regions of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, are abolished in accordance with the institutes under Chapter I ... of these regulations.

Službene novine Kraljevstva SHS, 27. februar 1919; Petranović-Zečević, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918-1988*, str. 275.

Source 3

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE KINGDOM OF SHS

Article 42 – the feudal relations are considered legally abolished on the day of liberation from foreign rule. If any injustices were made in solving the feudal relations or turning them into a private-legal relations prior to that day, a remedy shall be made in accordance with the law.

Serfs, and farmers in general who do the land in a serf-like relation, are hereby determined as free owners of the state land, they do not pay any remuneration for it, and they should be registered as owners.

Službene novine Kraljevstva SHS, br. 142, 28. jun 1921; Petranović-Zečević, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918-1988*, str. 193.

Source 5

PROGRAM OF THE YUGOSLAV MUSLIM ORGANIZATION

III. Economic policy

...Until the serf issue is resolved, legal relations remain unchanged between the land owners and serfs, along with the legal protection of the relations from both sides...

Petranović-Zečević, Istorija Jugoslavije 1918-1988, str. 205

Source 2

THE RADICALS AND THE MUSLIM DRAFT OF THE CONSTITUTION

... The agrarian question is even more difficult. For the Moslems, it is the most important one. ... The Moslems, therefore, ask for the absolute and general remuneration, for all properties whatever they may be if they had material value, which are to be confiscated or have been confiscated. And here is what the other interested party, the Bosnian serfs, say in their constitution:

"The land belongs to those who farm it. All so far forms of land ownership contrary to this principle are abolished, unless an exception is defined by law. There must be no serf, colonist and the like relations in existence anywhere. No compensation is recognized (to owners) for abolition of such relations to the benefit of those who farmed that land." ...

Petranović-Zečević, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918-1988*, str. 189-190

Source 4

AGRARIAN ISSUE IN B&H

That is why the Reis-ul-Ulema Causevic told the Prime-minister of the BaH National government, Atanasija Sola, that Bosnia dissented into an unprecedented terror. Moslem land owners were hit first; Serb peasants all over Bosnia were simply burning houses and other objects, thus taking the land away from them. The state of the nation was such that the Regent Alexander, in his Manifesto to the nation of 24 December 1918 (6 January 1919), inter alia, stated the following: 'I want the agrarian issue to be justly resolved immediately, serf-like relations and large land possessions to be abolished. In both cases, the land will be given to my poor farmers, and a proper compensation will be given to the previous owners.'"

M. Imamović, *Historija Bošnjaka*, str. 490

Cartoons

Presented on office windows of Banjaluka democratic newspaper "States", as a protest for politics of cooperation of the ruling Radicals with Yugoslav Moslem Organization and Slovenian peoples' party, and a slow pace in solving the agrarian issue.

Radical parliamentary community; Beys and Clergy

Arhiv BiH, Fond Zemaljska vlada za Bosnu i Hercegovinu, 12789/1920, prezidijal; Enes Omerović, Političko nasilje u BiH 1918-1921, magistarski rad, Filozofski fakultet u Sarajevu, str. 171



Pasic and Serfs

Arhiv BiH, Fond Zemaljska vlada za Bosnu i Hercegovinu, 12789/1920, prezidijal; Enes Omerović, Političko nasilje u BiH 1918-1921, magistarski rad, Filozofski fakultet u Sarajevu, str. 171)

Source 7

AGREEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT AND ISLAMIC COMMUNITY ABOUT VOTING FOR THE CONSTITUTION

1. The so-far owners in South Serbia shall receive just compensation for expropriated land. ...
3. If former owners do not have any other lands, except the one occupied by serfs or is in a serf-like relation, such owners shall, besides the remuneration in money, receive at least 20 hectares i.e. 200 acres of farming land, if they were in farming or intend to engage in farming in future, by themselves or under their private arrangement.
4. If former owners have any free land besides the serf land, they shall receive only monetary compensation...

Petranović-Zečević, Istorija Jugoslavije 1918-1988, str. 190-191

Source 8

Abolition of feudal relations in newly freed areas

Expanding the borders of Serbia in 1878 to south-east (Nis, Pirot, Leskovac) raised an issue of solving the property problems in newly freed areas. Serbia, as a country of free peasants, could not continue with feudal Turkish system, but proclaiming peasants owners of land without compensation was contrary to the regulations of the Berlin contract, which explicitly asked for respect of Moslem property rights. At the end of the war, a significant number of Moslems moved out from the newly freed areas. The first populating of the area, mostly by Montenegrins, was not regulated and caused chaotic taking of land and cutting of state forests.

http://sh.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agrarna_reforma (downloaded 6 April 2013)

Source 9

Agrarian reform and colonization in the areas of Kosovo and Macedonia after the Balkan wars

One of main measures for settling the situation in Kosovo and Metohija, as well as in Macedonia, should have been agrarian reform and colonization... The Decree on populating the newly freed and annexed areas to Kingdom of Serbia was, nevertheless, brought on 20 February 1914, but there was too little time for its methodic and massive realization under the mobilization and war circumstances that appeared in July 1914. The main goal was, however, liquidation of feudal relations, which were the precondition of earlier and found national relations; the land was mostly owned by Moslem land owners... The bearers of the feudal system were Turkish and Albanian Beys and Agas, while the subjected population mainly consisted of poor Serbs and Albanians.

Димитрије Богдановић, КЊИГА О КОСОВУ, СРПСКА АКАДЕМИЈА НАУКА И УМЕТНОСТИ ПОСЕБНА ИЗДАЊА, Књига DLXVI ПРЕДСЕДНИШТВО, Књига 2, Уредник: академик АНТОНИЈЕ ИСАКОВИЋ, БЕОГРАД, 1986 /knjiga dostupna na http://www.rastko.rs/kosovo/istorija/knjiga_o_kosovu/ (6. 4. 2013)

Thesis for the final discussion:

1. Where the sides were focused in the argumentation, did they specify the arguments important only for their side or for both sides?
2. To what extent the agrarian question contributed to the divisions of the Bosnian society?
3. How the agrarian question influenced migration from the country?
4. How the agrarian question was solved after the end of the Ottoman rule (in region of Novi Pazar, Kosovo and Macedonia) and after the end of Austro-Hungarian rule (in Bosnia and Herzegovina)?