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Review

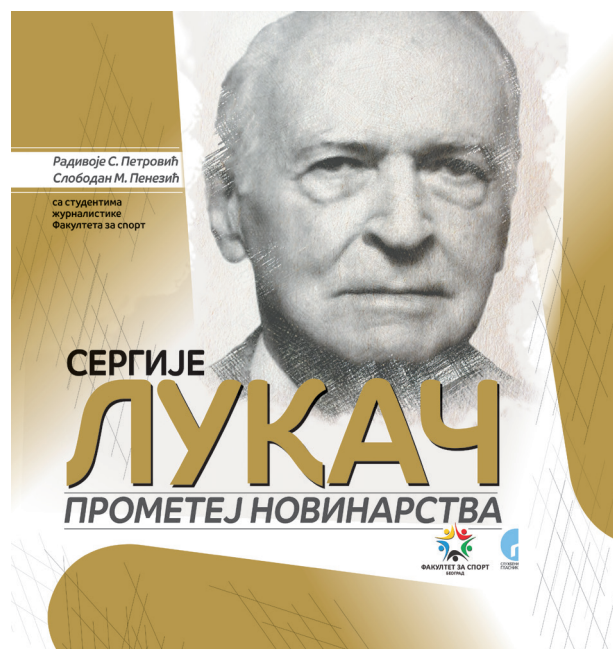
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Timeless Journalistic Mission of Sergije Lukač

A monument to the favourite professor



Radivoje S. Petrović, Slobodan M. Penezić,
with the students of journalism
at the Faculty of Sport (2023).
SERGIJE LUKAČ – PROMETHEUS OF JOURNALISM.
Belgrade: Faculty of Sport,
University “Union – Nikola Tesla”,
Službeni glasnik, 251 pages.

Professor Sergije Lukač’s name has been present in my professional life since 1992, when as a student of journalism at the Faculty of Political Science I seriously entered the theory of media. Later on, as an already experienced journalist in Radio Belgrade, I had the opportunity to make an interview with him. Although we never work together, I learnt very much from Sergije Lukač and until recently I wondered how it was possible that there had been no monograph about the man made such a contribution to journalism and numerous generations of journalists educated at the Faculty of Political Science – the monograph

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which would somehow be a gesture of respect and gratitude for all the knowledge he selflessly shared. In that respect, the book *Sergije Lukač – Prometheus of Journalism*, co-authored by Professors Radivoje S. Petrović and Slobodan M. Penezić, is a special monument raised by the journalists to their professor.

This book consisting of seven chapters – “Forgotten model”, “Journalist Bible”, “Life stamp”, “Long-distance sprinter”, “Pledge to journalist descendants”, “Thus wrote Serge”, and “Walking on Lukač’s path” – perceives Sergije Lukač’s life and work from several perspectives. First of all, it is done through the journalistic prism, because Professor Lukač was primarily a journalist. He published 1,549 texts and worked in NIN for as many as 25 years. Another perspective on which the authors place their focus is Professor Lukač’s academic work and the work of the Department of Journalism which he founded at the Faculty of Political Science in Belgrade in 1968. During his 17-year-long work, his lectures were attended by 17 generations of more than 1,000 students.

Furthermore, Petrović and Penezić also present Sergije Lukač through sport because it is well-known that “he treated sport as a virtue and a way of life”, i.e., his character of an exceptional erudite, a polyglot, and a man dedicated to respecting ethical principles.

An added value to this comprehensive research paper is given by the memories of Lukač’s contemporaries and closest associates, who do not separate his private and professional sides, but use that synergy to show the man respected by the entire public. The authors state multiple reasons for preparing this monograph. First of all, they find the monograph “an attempt to leave at least a written monument as a signpost to future generations for ultimate journalist knowledge and to those who have not remembered

him for many years, an opportunity to repay, at least in part, a huge moral debt to their colleague, friend or professor”. The other, also important motive is the opportunity to involve the students of sport journalist at the Faculty of Sport, University “Union – Nikola Tesla” in Belgrade, in material collecting and research. Namely, “apart from becoming familiar with his journalist work, they will be able to apply the experience acquired while working on the monograph in their further professional engagement”, Radivoje Petrović and Slobodan Penezić emphasize, and I completely agree with them, that “Professor Lukač’s thought is more important today than ever before, in the era of returning to traditional principles of journalism, when we are trying to restore the dignity of this profession and trust of the audience”.

The monograph is not only a homage to the professor, journalist and erudite, but also a textbook of journalism. In fact, the whole work contains morals and advice of Professor Lukač, who proved that theory and practice could and had to go together. In the book, it is also confirmed by his assistant at the Faculty, Professor Neda Todorović, who points out that “the professor had a visionary understanding that these two roads were the only possible way of modern journalist education”. The way of his seeing the journalist profession is perhaps described best by what Moša Pijade wrote in the past and the professor often quoted – that “a journalist spent half of his time writing about what he know nothing about, and the other half about what he knows but must not say”. This monograph is not only a book for reminding all those who were Sergije Lukač’s contemporaries, but also a guide for young journalists. That is why the authors very carefully and in the right places, with good examples of different situations from Sergije

Lukač's life, point to the central points of Lukač's so-called journalist Bible with the three most important things: "first, sufficient broad education, from which it is easy to delve into a specialized field; second, being familiar with the techniques of expression, media technology management and the feeling of measure in the emotional dosing of information; third, intellectual integrity of the person who is not afraid of expressing his/her own attitudes – but only those relying on thoroughly examined facts". Truth was one of the key concepts around which he built his attitude toward journalism, with a great awareness of the social context in which he wrote. That

is also what he taught journalists, predicting that in the 21st century they would encounter huge pressures because of the greater need for "introducing the monopoly of own truth". Within that context, Petrović and Penezić remind us of the professor's words about "the journalists' task being to help citizens to take their own attitudes and make responsible decisions. Complete information is the condition and the beginning of democracy". The authors also state that Professor Lukač was the first to observe the breakthrough of women in Yugoslav journalism of the time, noticing that women were those who were "oriented towards an interview, a somewhat



Sergije Lukač with his friends from Mostar grammar school

Photo: Radivoje Petrović

more complex and profound form, as opposed to short and quick conversations”.

Although this monograph is dedicated to the journalist and professor of journalism, it is not intended solely for journalists, because Sergije Lukač was much more than that. The whole book is permeated by the memories of numerous situations from his life, which was unusual from the very first days. Namely, the development of his character was definitely affected by the fact that his mother was Swiss, and his father a Bosnian Serb, as well as by the fact that during his childhood and growing up he was “at the crossroads

of different cultures” between Sarajevo and Mostar, via Bern, Budapest, Belgrade and Zagreb. His earliest days were marked by the Second World War; he was a contemporary of the post-war proletariat dictatorship, and of the breakup of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Besides journalism, sport was his great love. Apart from athletics, he also liked football and skiing, while his colleague journalist, Milan Milošević, in his memory of Sergije Lukač, says that “until very old age Lukač pursued the classical ancient virtue which connects the sound body with the sound spirit... he said that game revealed someone’s personality more



Sergije Lukač with his co-workers from the first Serbian public relations agency P.R.A.

Photo: Radivoje Petrović

than anything else". Professor Rade Veljanovski emphasizes a specific feature of Lukač's work – the fact that he considered sport a social phenomenon and that his sport journalism was "at the level of sport philosophy, hence it is particularly valuable for beginners in this branch of journalism". Lukač himself believed that "a sport journalist is a reporter, a commentator, a writer of texts, the one who interviews people and thus, someone who must be skilled in all journalist genres".

In chapter five of the monograph *Sergije Lukač – Prometheus of Journalism*, the authors provide a certain pledge to journalist descendants because "Sergije Lukač was and remains a professional and human model to generations of journalists", the man who did very much to enable us to keep up with the world when it comes to technologies, communications, media and journalism on the whole. That is why the involvement of the students of journalism at the Faculty of Sport, University "Union – Nikola Tesla" in collecting the material for this monograph is practical work in research journalism and a guideline for similar projects in the future.

Guiding us, at moments with the features of fiction writing, through the life and work of Sergije Lukač, Radivoje Petrović and Slobodan Penezić skillfully combine the memories of Lukač's contemporaries, events from his private and professional life, journalist and academic engagement, life messages of the professor, along with the conclusion that "at the time when the fundamental principles of proper

performance of journalist work have long been tested, and the ideals of this profession often completely suppressed to the background, this overview of Lukač's journalistic-academic manifesto can perfectly serve as a beacon and a signpost in the dark, in which a number of those who have been unfoundedly considered journalists and media have been traveling for a long time".

This monograph is not only returning to or remembering the past, but also a view of the future, a type of a signpost to young people who are just entering the world of journalism and a reminder to professional journalists of returning to the basic principles of the profession. Honour and knowledge. The manner in which the monograph was prepared may serve to man others as a motive "to return to professionalism, knowledge, truth, honesty and honour, all those characteristics endowing the personality and work of Sergije Lukač in a sea of manipulations and propaganda layers which, among other things, seriously undermine the status of a beautiful and useful profession which was formerly a responsible profession above all".

Due to the all above-mentioned, I recommend this book as literature not only to those who will go in for journalism as a profession, but to the entire readership which, by reading the monograph about Professor Sergije Lukač, will be able to understand the challenges facing today's journalism and to re-examine the expectations concerning journalists and media, i.e., the degree of own critical perception of the reality, which was frequently spoken about by Professor Lukač himself.

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