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## HISTORY AND POLITICS

**Abstract:** Throughout centuries there has been accumulated a persuasive and abundant evidence showing that History and Politics went hand in hand! Political life and activities through centuries were followed, commented and described by historians. All political actions left behind a substantial amount of recorded and unrecorded descriptions, analysis, criticism and/or laudations. Records written in different materials (clay, stone, papyrus, pergamena, paper, photos, etc.) were basis for examination not only of the past events, but also for political moves, party struggles, state building, diplomatic activities. These and other materials were sometimes preserved carefully, but very often destroyed. Historians, chroniclers, monks and other dug put into these records in order to reconstruct the past and the role of individuals. All of them tended to look at the decision-makers and governments in order to judge their policies, validity of their decision, motives and achievements or defeats. Historical events, past and present, produce evidence and testimony for the following political processes: ways of thinking, character of decision-makings and consequences produced by victory, defeat or draw. Politicians and participants of the events, decision-makers and others left behind stream of memoirs diaries and other testimonies of certain events or important personalities. At that point politicians and historians started to clash. Basic reason for the clash was the desire of the politicians to hide certain decisions and events, while historians wanted to expose them in public. The two sides produced two different types of history – critical and uncritical. Their struggle started long ago, but it lasts until our days. In the paper numerous examples of such a practice will be given.

In order to make this brief expose stimulating, I would like to make several introductory remarks hoping that ideas and conclusions expressed in it will be the subject of subsequent discussion. Their clarifications /definitions might help to avoid possible misunderstanding.

According to a widely accepted definition “history is a branch of knowledge that records and explains past events.” It also tends to be critical and objective. On the other hand, the term “politics” “encompasses political actions and practic-

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es that examine activities characterized by artful and often dishonest practices.” These definitions clearly uncover different aims, methods and purposes of the two scholarly disciplines.

Throughout centuries there was accumulated a persuasive and rich evidence showing that History and Politics went hand in hand, although they had different aims and purposes. Political events, practices and activities of politicians and statesmen throughout centuries were richly recorded. As a result a vast amount of recorded materials was left for examination and analysis. These materials were preserved in different shapes and size (clay, stone, papyrus, pergamena, paper, photos and other). They helped reconstruct not only the events past, but also political moves, state building, party struggles, diplomatic activities, etc. Testimonies of the past were sometimes well preserved, although some of them come to us in a rather shabby shape. Generations of historians, chroniclers, monks, and others had to dig deep into these records in order to reconstruct the events of the past and the roles of certain institutions and individuals. Politicians and participants in important decision-making processes left behind them a stream of memoirs, diaries, recollections, remembrances, letters and other testimonies in which they described certain events, as well as place and role of important personalities.

At this point historians and politicians began to clash. The basic reasons for it was the tendency of the politicians to remove or conceal existing evidence, cover certain events with mystery and darkness in order to confuse the readers and contemporaries, namely to hide the truth. On the other hand, historians intended to expose the facts in public, scrutinize them, criticize the decision-makers, and explore their motives and reasons for making respective steps and /or decisions. Therefore, one might talk about two different types of history – critical one, written by historians, and uncritical one, written by former politicians, memoirists, journalists and others. The growth of critical history only increased the differences and sharpened the conflicts between the two.

Since we are concerned with the modern and contemporary world, our attention should be turned towards examples and practices carried out during the XIXth and XXth centuries. Let me start with the worst abuse committed by the politicians. In order to protect themselves from criticisms, they helped the laws being introduced prohibiting the use of certain documents for research. Since the laws passed, they were obviously responsible for the restrictions imposed upon the researchers. Furthermore, many of the most prominent politicians and statesmen decided to destroy, censure and change the contents of documents and testimonies of their activities, views and decisions. A good example might be the case of Pope Pius XII (1938–1958). Prominent researchers of the Vatican policies during the Second World War and its aftermath, claimed that the pope, at the end of his life burned the most sensitive documents of his pontificate. Thus, historians were deprived of important evidence needed to reconstruct the policies of the Holy See and the pope himself.

There are other examples of restrictions. The intelligence services and special agencies of virtually all states are very restrictive in allowing historians to carry out

research of special topics. For instance, the US Army Counter Intelligence Corps is very restrictive in allowing research on their premises. Names and identities of individuals and institutions are blackened out despite the fact that so many decades have passed by since these documents were written. Materials from certain archives, public and private are still partially closed for the research of the First and Second World Wars. It is difficult to find any valid reason for such restrictions. The result is that truth could not come out to the public eye.

There are many cases which confirm such practices. For example, the USA policies concerning Vietnam were described favourable in numerous speeches and statements made by the responsible members of the Kennedy and Johnson administration. The Tonkin resolution accepted by Congress in 1965 was thus based on false evidence. Its content opened a way to a more aggressive policy of the USA towards Vietnam. However, several years later an unauthorized publication of the Pentagon Papers showed altogether different picture of the administration policies and intentions. The consequences of such an act were tremendous. The USA suffered the first military defeat in the XXth century, tens of thousands young people were killed and incapacitated, enormous trauma hit the nation, billions of dollars were wasted. It took a long time for the nation to find its peace. Much the same could be said about the publication of the *Vickyleeks'* Documents. They contain the most confidential and secret documents from different institutions (State Department, Pentagon, FBI). These documents confirm that reality was completely different from the statements made by the administration officials. These and similar practices put historians in front of an enormous task. They have to solve numerous problems, deny the authenticity of official interpretations and calm down public, confused by the contradictory evidence; finally, to establish the truth. This costs time and money.

There are many reasons which make politics and history go to the opposite directions. Their purposes are different. As an "art of possible" politics expanded its ways and means, namely it is allowed to use all available instruments to accomplish determined goals. Although, there are no clearly defined rules and methodology, politicians and institutions they direct use diplomacy, negotiations, pressure, threats, blackmail, spying and wide range of other instruments and practices. Alliances, treaties, secret annexes, international conferences are at hand too. Scrupulosity and good manners are frequently forgotten, although smiles, cordiality, social contacts abound. Tricks are permissible too, as well as attractive females. In other words, arsenal of instruments practiced in politics is impressive indeed. Sheer fraud and falsifications ought to be added to this long list. The most modern technological gadgets should not be forgotten. In order to examine carefully all details and finesses of the politics, historians need a lot of time and reliable evidence to verify each case with appropriate attention. Lack of evidence frequently make their efforts fruitless. Yet, it should be made clear that above mentioned instruments and practices were used from the time immemorial to the present day.

The abuse of truth and the falsification of documents led as a numerous examples confirm, to the international conflicts, wars and instability with the far reach-

ing results. The drastic example of cheating and falsification is the famous “Emms Despatch”. It was the result of Otto von Bismarck’s desire to remove France from the political scene in the struggle for the German unification. The incident started with a candidacy of Prince Leopold Hoenzolern, a cousin of the Prussian King, Wilhelm I, to the Spanish throne. His candidacy to the throne was met with the fierce opposition of Emperor Napoleon III. The French ambassador in Berlin was instructed to ask King Wilhelm I to advise Leopold to give up his candidacy and withdraw his name. Instead of Berlin, the ambassador went to Emms spa to convey the message to the King who duly accepted the demand from Paris. Bismarck decided to use this to provoke the conflict with France. He changed the content of the dispatch by making it insulting to Napoleon III and France. When faced with it, the Emperor, his ministers and public considered it as a *casus belli*. On July 19, 1870, the French ambassador handed to Bismarck the message which meant the war. As is well known, France was defeated, Napoleon III resigned, the republic was proclaimed, country was occupied and charged to pay 5 billions of golden francs to Germany. Finally, King of Prussia proclaimed in Versailles in January 1871, the unification of Germany. History of Europe went to a higher gear. Balance of powers was changed, new political and military blocks were created and the armament started. Historians were left with the task of clearing the mess and to determine who was responsible for the events of such proportions. Murky secret deals were common practices and still are. In such deals, politicians and diplomats readily decide on the destiny of nations and states. Such deals also have tremendous consequences which their creators are not ready to admit. Namely, in order to achieve certain goals, they are ready to hand in subjects of one state to the other without consulting them. Great Britain was prominent in making such deals. A good example of it was the transfer of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Ottoman to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was the result of the secret deal concluded at the end of the Eastern crisis 1875–1878, before the Congress of Berlin met. Russia, Great Britain and Austro-Hungary, reached an agreement in May of 1878 which permitted the Habsburg Empire to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina in order “to introduce peace and order.” Bismarck concurred. The consequences of the deal were far reaching, one may say, catastrophic. Besides the fact that it stirred nationalistic and religious agitation and crisis in the provinces, the secret deal had sown the seeds of the First World War. Historians are left with a task to establish who was to be blamed for such an outcome, namely, the outbreak of the war. A long and bitter discussion followed in which Serbia was accused by many politicians and statesmen as being responsible for it. Historians appear not to be objective and endeavoured to protect politicians and states from the responsibility for the conflict.

Much the same was repeated in 1915, when Great Britain, France and Russia, concluded the secret Pact of London in order to bring Italy into the war on their side. As a compensation, the deal offered to Italy the Slavic and German territories in Dalmatia, Istria, the South Tyrol. After the end of the war a long and bitter polemics between the Allies, Italy, the USA and the Kingdom of SHS followed, to last until recent days.

Lying was the frequent practice as well. It was used by virtually all Great Powers in their political dealings with their rivals and small states. The most fragrant case happened with Montenegro, which was an independent kingdom before becoming the part of the Kingdom of SHS. The major factor in its disappearance as an independent state was the decision of the British War Cabinet. On January 4, 1918, that body discussed the problem of the war aims. It was decided, among other things, that Montenegro should be absorbed into the Kingdom of Serbia after the end of the war. However, two days later, on January 6, in a speech before the Trade Union, David Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, declared that one of the war aims of his country was the restoration of Montenegro as an independent state. It was a fragrant lie. Unaware of this lie, the public opinion and the supporters of the independent Montenegro, accused Serbia for engineering Montenegro's disappearance. A long and bitter dispute ensued and lasted until the most recent times. Politicians thus created a problem by obvious deception.

Numerous other examples could be used to illustrate the problems mentioned in this exposition. However, time and space force me to stop here. From the above, it is obvious that politicians and historians are often performing different jobs, tasks and duties. The first are fulfilling the aims determined or desired by the state. In order to accomplish it, they do not hesitate to use doubtful and hardly moral ways and means. The second, in a search for the truth, unravel politicians' motives, behaviour and accomplishments. They also point out to the consequences of politics and certain states and individuals. Politicians do try to hide their actions and deeds. In their memoirs, diaries and correspondences, they reveal the truth as they see it and sometimes add reasons for it. However, their truth often differs from the one written in the documents or seen in real settings. Therefore, coming to an objective truth becomes difficult and in some cases unfeasible task. The struggle between the two, politicians and historians, never ends.

